THE CHARITIES OF
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

AN EVALUATION

OF

HIS IDEAS, PRINCIPLES AND METHODS

A Dissertation Submitted to the
Faculty of Philosophy of the

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

CYPRIAN W. EMANUEL, O.F.M.
Of the Province of the Sacred Heart
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA
WASHINGTON, D. C.
1923

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58

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

The Catholics of the United States through their representative leaders and social agencies have within recent years evinced an increased practical interest in social problems and in organized efforts of charity. This waxing interest has in turn created on the part of both individuals and organizations, irrespective of religious affiliations, a growing demand for information on Catholic principles in the field of social reform and social relief. The present work has been undertaken as a modest attempt to respond, though but indirectly and partially, to this demand.

St. Vincent de Paul was the most prominent and active dispenser of charity in modern times. He busied himself during the long years of his charitable career with the relief of practically every form of human need. And his influence on practical charities has continued down to our own day through his splendid organizations, especially the Priests of the Mission, called also the Vincentian Fathers or Lazarists, and the Sisters of Charity. Moreover, his principles and methods have received the stamp of the Church's approval through his formal appointment by the Holy See as the patron and model of all Catholic charities.

A study of St. Vincent's charities, therefore, not only acquaints us with the Saint's personal ideas, principles and methods of relief while giving us a general insight into the dispensation of charity in France during the first half of the seventeenth century, but it serves at the same time to acquaint us with many of the principles and methods that underlie the activities of Catholic agencies to-day.

This treatise is, then, in no sense hagiographical or ascetical. And hence it is not, nor is it intended to be, a portrayal of the whole St. Vincent, but only of St. Vincent the exponent of practical charities. It has been the endeavor of the author throughout to isolate the natural from the supernatural in the Saint's life and works, in as far as it

is possible to do so in a life where the two elements were so intimately associated, and to submit to a critical scrutiny his contributions to our charities in the realm of ideas, principles[1] and methods.

The present work is based on the most reliable documentary evidence, viz., the *Lettres, Conférences* and *Règlements* of St. Vincent, and his best biographies.

It is commonly estimated that Vincent de Paul was the author of not less than 30,000 letters to persons of every rank and calling during his long and busy life. He wrote them in his own hand until the end of 1645. During the last fifteen years of his life, however, he dictated most of them to his secretary, Frère Ducourneau, a lay brother of the Congregation. The task of collecting them began immediately after his death. A considerable number was destroyed by fire in the pillaging of Saint Lazare July 12-13, 1789. Of those that remained, together with others recovered later, some few were published in 1834 by M. Gossin in his work *Saint Vincent de Paul peint par ses écrits* (Paris); some were published by M. Etienne in 1845; some were incorporated by M. Feillet in his work *La misère au temps de la Fronde et saint Vincent de Paul* (Paris, 1862) and by Abbé Maynard in his biography of the Saint (Paris, 1860; revised ed. 1874).

After 1870 the Priests of the Mission began gathering all available letters from their various archives in anticipation of making them accessible to the members of the Congregation by publishing the entire collection in a uniform edition. Accordingly, in 1880 the *Lettres de Saint Vincent de Paul* appeared (for private circulation) in 4 vols. (Paris). A supplement was added in 1888. There have since been published *Lettres inédites de saint Vincent de Paul* by the Vincentian historian, Father Coste, in *Revue de Gascogne*, 1909 and 1911; *Lettres choisies de saint Vincent de Paul* (Paris, 1911); and the epistolary correspondence between St. Vincent and the Ladies of Charity in *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Dames de la Charité* by Pierre Coste, C. M., Paris,

[1] The author has not attempted to adhere to the strict etymological distinction between *ideas* and *principles* in the first two sections of this work. He has chosen, more or less arbitrarily, to have the former comprise only the wider and more general social views of Vincent de Paul, while the latter are limited to his views on social service together with his settled modes of action resulting therefrom.

1917, pp. 179-250. The total number of letters thus published is approximately 3200.[2] The edition of 1880 was made somewhat hastily, and is in consequence not sufficiently critical, especially as regards dates. A new edition is being prepared at the mother house of the Congregation of the Mission at Paris under the efficient leadership of Father Coste.

Two distinct sets of St. Vincent's spiritual conferences have come down to us, viz., his conferences to the Priests of the Mission and his conferences to the Daughters of Charity. Vincent did not deliver these conferences from manuscript, nor, as far as is known, did he even write them out in sketch as a preparation. But the Priests and the Daughters of Charity committed them to writing almost immediately either from notes taken during the conference or from memory. So faithfully were they thus reproduced that in many cases even the Saint's peculiar expressions and modes of speech reappear. Their exactness and authenticity have never been questioned.

The conferences to the Missionaries were published in 1881 (Paris) for the exclusive use of the members of the Congregation under the title of *Avis et Conférences Spirituelles de Saint Vincent de Paul aux Membres de la Congrégation*. The conferences to the Daughters of Charity appeared in print for the first time in 1803 (2 vols.). In 1825 and 1846 new editions, enlarged with additional conferences, made their appearance. The latest edition, entitled *Conférences de Saint Vincent de Paul aux Filles de la Charité* (2 vols.), was gotten out in 1881 (Paris).

Besides the conferences mentioned above, we have also a number of St. Vincent's conferences to the Ladies of Charity. Most of these have been preserved only in sketch. They were published in 1888 (Paris) as pp. 200-233 of *Lettres et Conférences de S. Vincent de Paul (Supplément)* and in 1917 as pp. 107-178 of *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Dames de la Charité* (Pierre Coste, C. M., Paris). All these various conferences have been studied in the preparation of this work.

St. Vincent drafted rules and constitutions for the Congregation of the Mission, for the Daughters of Charity and

[2] The author studied about 3,100 in the preparation of this work.

for the various lay confraternities of charity. Through the courteous kindness of the Vincentian Fathers of Germantown, Philadelphia, the author was permitted to study the Rule of the Priests of the Mission and the Common Rule of the Daughters of Charity, together with the particular regulations compiled by St. Vincent for the Daughters exercising their charity in the parishes, as also the constitution drafted by the Saint in 1640 for the Daughters of Charity at the hospital of Angers.

Of the constitutions drafted by St. Vincent for the lay confraternities, the author was enabled to study a fairly representative number, viz., five for the confraternities of the towns and villages (associations of women), one for a confraternity composed of both men and women, one containing regulations for the men's division of a similarly mixed confraternity, one regulating industrial training for poor boys, one for a united conference of charity and society of the Holy Name, one for the Ladies of the Parishes, one for the Ladies of the Royal Court and three for the Ladies of the Hôtel-Dieu. These may be found in *Lettres et Conférences de S. Vincent de Paul (Supplément)*, pp. 383-433, 452-454, 466-473, 475-6, Father Coste's *Saint Vincent de Paul et les Dames de la Charité*, pp. 97-106, and *Lettres*, i., 20.

Of the many current biographies of Vincent de Paul there are but three that can lay claim to originality in any marked degree. The first in the order of time is *La vie du vén. serviteur de Dieu, Vincent de Paul*, 3 vols., Abelly, Paris, 1664. It has passed through many editions. Reference in the following pages is made to the edition of 1891 (Paris). From an historical point of view this biography is the most weighty. It appeared four years after St. Vincent's death under the name of Abelly, Bishop of Rodez, but in reality the Saint's confrères in religion were more truly its authors. The authenticity of the facts therein set forth has never been called in question.

In other respects, however, the work does not merit like praise. No attempt seems to have been made at literary style or methodical arrangement. The three volumes are to a great extent a threefold repetition, each fragmentary, of the same history without presenting one complete picture of St. Vincent.

The canonization of St. Vincent in 1737 gave occasion to M. Collet, a priest of the Mission, to undertake the writing of a new biography. After ten years' preparation and studying of the sources, he published his work, *Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul* (2 vols., Nancy), in 1748. It is much more concise, better arranged, and less unctuous than is the work of Abelly. It has since appeared in an English translation (Baltimore, 1845).

The third biography based on a study of the original documents is Abbé Maynard's *Saint Vincent de Paul, sa vie, son temps, ses oeuvres, son influence,* in four volumes, published at Paris in 1860 and revised in 1874. As regards form, Maynard adopts a middle course between the work of Abelly and that of Collet. He gives a detailed and methodical account of the Saint's life and activities.

All the other biographies of the Saint are based on these three accounts, though some of them have incorporated a few more recently discovered original documents. At the present time Father Coste is occupied with the preparation of a new biography which promises to contain data until now unknown, especially concerning the early years of St. Vincent.

The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the Rev. Dr. William Joseph Kerby and the Rev. Dr. John O'Grady, Professor and Associate Professor, respectively, of Sociology at the Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., under whose general direction this work has been written. He wishes to express his gratitude also to the Very Rev. Frederic J. Maune, Provincial Superior of the Eastern Vincentian Province, without whose kind permission he could not have had access to the Vincentian literature requisite for the preparation of this study. To the Vincentian Fathers of St. Vincent's Seminary, Germantown, Philadelphia, and of Niagara University, Niagara, N. Y., he likewise returns sincere thanks for the genuine hospitality tendered him during his visits there in the interest of this work. Lastly, special gratitude is due the Rev. F. P. Drouet, C. M., of Niagara University, and to the Rev. Charles L. Souvay, C. M., D. D., Ph. D., D. S. S., of Kenrick Seminary, Webster Groves, Mo., for furnishing and procuring valuable material.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter I. France at the Time of St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660)	1
1. Political France	1
2. Religious France	4
3. Financial France	6
4. Social France	7
Chapter II. Saint Vincent de Paul	13
1. Biographical Sketch	13
2. Characteristics	17
SECTION I. The General Sociological and Politico-Economic Ideas of St. Vincent de Paul	49
Chapter I. Conservatism	51
Chapter II. The Power and Duties of the State	59
Chapter III. Poverty	73
Chapter IV. Charity	81
SECTION II. The Principles of St. Vincent de Paul in Social Service	87
Chapter I. The Service of the Poor	89
1. The Supernatural in Social Service	89
2. Free Service	97
3. Personal Service	100
Chapter II. Organized Charity	103
1. Organization in Social Service	104
2. Meetings	111
3. Coöperation	114
Chapter III. Discrimination in Charity	119
1. The Needy	119
2. Case Investigation	119
3. Case Records	124
Chapter IV. Revenues	127
1. Private Contributions	127
2. State Aid	130
3. Publicity	131
Chapter V. The Personnel	137
1. The Social Worker	137
A. The Various Classes Engaged in Social Service	137
B. The Trained Social Worker	139
C. Part-Time and Full-Time Workers	144
D. The Volunteer	145
2. The Nurse	147
A. The Nurse and the Patient	147
B. The Nurse and the Physician	151

Page

Chapter VI. Relief 155
1. The General Nature of Relief 155
2. The Obligation of Earning One's Livelihood..... 157
3. Rehabilitation 159
4. Institutional vs. Home Care 161

SECTION III. The Methods of St. Vincent de Paul in Social Service 163

Chapter I. The Care of the Sick and the Insane..... 165
1. Visiting Nursing 165
A. The Confraternities of the Towns and Villages... 165
B. The Ladies of the Parishes 169
C. The Ladies of *l'Hôtel Dieu*..... 172
D. The Daughters of Charity 179
E. The Priests of the Mission and the Sick..... 183
2. Hospital Nursing 185
3. The Insane 190
A. Saint-Lazare and the Insane 191
B. The Daughters of Charity and the Insane..... 192

Chapter II. Child Welfare Work 195
1. The Foundlings 195
2. Schools 219
3. Industrial Training 228

Chapter III. Delinquents 235
1. Prison Work 235
2. Juvenile Delinquents 243
3. The Magdalens 247
A. Saint Vincent and *la Madeleine* 249
B. St. Vincent and the Daughters of Providence..... 251
C. Special Protective Work 252

Chapter IV. The Relief of Poverty 255
1. Men's Confraternities 255
2. M. de Renti 258
3. The Ladies of Charity 260
4. Home for the Aged Poor 266
5. *L'Hôpital Général* 269
6. General Relief 275
A. The Relief of Lorraine 275
B. The Relief of Picardy and Champagne 286
C. The Relief of Poland 301
D. The Relief of Gennevilliers 309
E. The Relief of Paris and Environs During the Fronde 310
F. The Relief of Mâçon..... 322

CONCLUSION 329

BIBLIOGRAPHY 331

ALPHABETICAL INDEX 333

THE CHARITIES OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

France at the Time of St. Vincent de Paul (1580-1660)

The conditions of France during the first half of the seventeenth century were a potent factor in molding St. Vincent de Paul's life of love and self-sacrifice. They occasioned his extensive and varied activities by being responsible for the miseries he strove to alleviate. In many cases, too, they suggested the means and methods of relief and dictated the policies by which his undertakings were governed. For an adequate understanding of St. Vincent's works, therefore, at least a cursory glance at the history of France at this period is imperative[1].

1. *Political France*

Politically France was an absolute monarchy.[2] The king was responsible to no earthly power in temporal affairs.

[1] For details *cf., e.g.,* Sully, *Mémoires,* English trans., Charlotte Lennox, 1756; Richelieu, *Testament Politique,* Amsterdam, 1688; d'Avenel, *La fortune privée à travers sept siècles,* Paris, 1895; Idem, *Paysans et ouvriers depuis sept cents ans,* Paris, 1899; Martin Saint-Leon, *Histoire de corporations de métiers depuis leurs origines jusqu' à leur suppression en 1791,* Paris, 1897; Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières et de l'industrie en France avant 1789,* vol. ii., Paris, 1901; Feillet, *La misère au temps de la Fronde et de S. Vincent de Paul,* Paris, 1862; Lallemand, *Histoire de la charité,* vol. iv., Paris, 1910, 1912; Weiss, *Weltgeschichte,* vols. viii., ix., Graz u. Leipzig, 1895, 1898; Ranke, *Franzoesische Geschichte, vorn. im sechszehnten u. siebenzehnten Jahrhundert,* 6 vols., 4te Auflage, Leipzig, 1876; Adams, *The Growth of the French Nation,* N. Y., 1908; Johnson, *Europe in the Sixteenth Century, 1494-1598,* 5th ed., London, 1909; Lodge, *Richelieu,* N. Y., 1896; Schwill, *A Political History of Modern Europe from the Reformation to the Present Day,* N. Y., 1908; Wakeman, *Ascendency of France,* 1598-1715, N. Y., 1915.

[2] Henry III, 1574-1589; Henry IV, 1589-1610 (Duc de Sully, Prime Minister); Louis XIII, 1610-1643 (Marie de Medici, Regent during his minority; Cardinal Richelieu, Prime Minister, 1624-1642); Louis XIV, 1643-1715 (Anne of Austria, Regent during his minority; Cardinal Mazarin, Prime Minister, 1643-1661).

The supreme legislative, judiciary, and administrative functions of government centered in him. The Parliament of Paris was never legally a legislative or administrative body in the strict sense of the word, despite its occasional pretensions to the contrary. It was merely the supreme court of justice in the realm and the guardian of its fundamental laws. The General Estates, composed of representatives of the clergy, the nobles, and the people, and convoked at irregular intervals at the pleasure of the king, were the official organ of public opinion and of the social conscience. The king took their views into consideration when framing a law. He also consulted the members of his cabinet. But neither of these bodies had a deciding vote.

The General Estates, assembled at Paris in 1614, resolved as a fundamental law of the realm, that the king held his power from God alone, and, hence, no earthly power, lay or ecclesiastic, enjoyed the right of absolving his subjects from their oath of allegiance. The clergy and the officials of the state, before entering upon their respective offices, were to swear adherence to this principle. Any subject opposing it was to be declared guilty of high treason.[3] The Parliament confirmed this view by declaring that it merely expressed a principle inherently connected with the idea of the royal power of France.

Richelieu during his ministry was primarily bent upon strengthening the monarchy and raising France to a commanding position among the nations of Europe. To these ends all else was subservient. The individual was practically absorbed by the egotistic state. The state tended to consider him of value only in so far as he was a political asset and was inclined to go to almost any length in its demands upon his life, services, and resources.

Coexistent with the lofty conception of the origin, dignity, and unrestricted supremacy of the royal power, we find in practice almost universal disrespect for law, order, and authority, born of personal ambitions, political intrigues, rebellions, and civil strifes. The religious wars, or

[3] This forceful expression of public opinion was the reaction against the recognized right of the Popes during the Middle Ages to absolve from their oath of allegiance the subjects of unworthy rulers.

rather political civil wars, waged under the garb and guise of religion, had devastated France almost uninterruptedly throughout the last four decades of the sixteenth century. The king, the Catholic League, and the Huguenots, each had armies recruited on French soil and reënforced with foreign mercenaries. The wars were waged with the fury and cruelty of religious fanaticism. Churches, monasteries, and schools were pillaged and burned, or turned into barracks and fortresses. Opposed by the great and influential nobles, by the clergy, the Pope, the estates, and the cities, Henry of Navarre, later Henry IV, fought his way to the throne during the last decade of the sixteenth century; he was forced to reconquer practically the whole of France. Every ambitious pretender to the royal power, every discontented noble, was assured of a following to force his claims or avenge his grievances at the point of the sword.

Individuals appointed to royal offices felt themselves independent and abused their power for the furtherance of selfish interests and ambitions. The great nobles sought to transform the provinces they governed into independent states. They claimed the right to settle their disputes by what had once been their recognized prerogative—private wars. Whenever they had occasion to quarrel with the royal court, they retreated to their provinces, which served either as a secure asylum or as a base of attack.

Henry IV curtailed their power by appointing lieutenants general to act as direct agents of the crown and by entrusting the government of the chief provincial towns to persons independent of the nobles. When Richelieu entered the ministry in 1624, he found the large provinces divided among nineteen governors, all belonging to the highest rank of the nobility. At the time of his death, eighteen years later, but four of these had retained their positions. The others had been supplanted by officials chosen from the middle class of society, called *intendants,* who had neither the means nor the desire to resist the crown. The nobles retained their social dignity and their revenues but no substantial authority.

There were, too, many and flagrant abuses in the administration of justice. The king, or his prime minister, ar-

rested persons at will, generally political offenders of social prominence, and detained them in prison or condemned them to death without trial or conviction. Richelieu contends in his *Testament Politique* that in offences against the state one must act on subjective conviction of guilt, for such offences are usually planned in secrecy and must be prematurely frustrated. It might prove disastrous to the state if one were to await full proof.

In the provinces, especially during the early years of the seventeenth century, the weak were afforded no protection against the strong. Crime went unpunished. The nobles gave themselves with impunity to violence and rapine. The soldiers and robber bands devastated entire districts undisturbed by the civil power. The officers of justice either were without sufficient authority or lent their aid to the frustration of justice. It became a matter of self-preservation to take justice into one's own hands. Private revenge and retaliation were of daily occurrence.

2. *Religious France*

The relations of the French nation with the universal Church were weak and strained. A strong national spirit had entered into ecclesiastical affairs. In her foreign and domestic policies France was no longer guided by the interests of Catholicism at large but sought exclusively the good of the nation. The Gallican Liberties had already taken deep root in the minds of the French clergy and manifested themselves in the policies of the civil authorities. The Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges (1438) had been condemned by the 5th Lateran Council (1512-1517) and was rejected in the Concordat of the Holy See with Francis I (1516). But the ideas therein contained lived on. The parliaments, the jurists, the magistrates, adhered to them; the rise of Protestantism in France strengthened them; the scholars further developed them. They began, in consequence, to be looked upon, not as privileges granted by the Pope to the French nation, but as the rights of the primitive Church, which the Church of France had conserved more intact throughout the centuries than had the other nations.

In 1274 the king was granted the privilege of receiving

the revenues of certain bishoprics during their vacancies. It was now no longer considered a privilege, but demanded as a royal prerogative and extended by abuse to practically all the bishoprics of the realm. It was, therefore, to the financial interest of the king to be slow in filling episcopal vacancies. A further manifestation of the Gallican Liberties at this period which wrought much harm, was the refusal of the government to accept and promulgate the reform decrees of the Council of Trent.

The Church of France, we might say, had become in the eyes of the king a royal institution, and its offices and dignities available as pensions and rewards for his favorite friends. Moreover, many of the noble families placed their younger sons in the ranks of the clergy and claimed for them, even from their youth, and independently of their moral and intellectual fitness, the hereditary right to these responsible positions in the Church.

The people, too, had become infected by the irreligious atmosphere of the age. It is true, the great mass of the French nation had remained Catholic at heart. Their weakened faith, religious indifference, and laxity of morals, were not so much the result of false philosophic thought, though Protestantism had left its unmistakable impress, as the almost inevitable outcome of the prevailing social and ecclesiastical conditions.

The worldliness, the ambitions, and the ignorance of the hierarchy could not but react upon the flocks entrusted to their charge. Meagrely instructed by their pastors, or entirely neglected or forsaken by them, the people remained grossly ignorant of some of the most essential doctrines of their religion and of the duties of the Christian life. Their moral sense had been blunted by religious animosities, wars, and the general lawlessness of the times. Sully, the Huguenot minister of Henry IV, when speaking of the events of 1594, characterizes the age as one that had "lost all distinction between virtue and vice."[4]

Duelling is worthy of special note. It was in vogue as perhaps but seldom before. The protests of the Church

[4] *Mémoires*, i., 334.

compelled the king to intervene. In 1602 a law was passed declaring duelling and assistance thereat high treason. But its very severity hampered its enforcement. Two thousand of the nobility met their death in these combats between the years 1601 and 1609. In this latter year the rigor of the law was mitigated. Richelieu, too, was forced to adopt stringent measures against this vice.[5]

3. *Financial France*

France was on the verge of bankruptcy throughout the period of St. Vincent's activity, with the sole exception of the latter years of the reign of Henry IV. This condition must be attributed to the expenses of the civil and foreign wars, the luxurious expenditures of the royal court for its own pleasures and for the silencing of disgruntled nobles, the notorious abuses in the financial system, and the depreciation of money brought about by the influx into Europe of precious metals from the newly discovered Americas.

Little wonder, then, that the royal taxes were numerous and exorbitant. They were, moreover, unevenly divided. Scarcely any of them fell on all parts of the realm. To this territorial inequality was added the inequality arising from personal privileges. Ecclesiastics, nobles, and many of the crown officials, were exempt from the heaviest imposts. The principal weight of the taxes rested, therefore, on the lower classes, and more particularly on the peasantry.

The taxes, too, were collected with great fraud and oppression. Every branch of indirect taxation was farmed out. This gave rise to a greedy host of agents, inspectors, and taxgatherers, who were bent on enriching themselves at the expense of the taxpayers. The enormous expenses, for example, incurred during the Thirty Years' War compelled the government to resort to the most extravagant expedients for the procuring of funds. Large foreign loans were made. In many cases, too, the bankers furnished the money and were to reimburse themselves from the taxes, the collection of which was placed in their hands. This they did through

[5] Weiss, viii., 563; Idem, ix., 239.

their agents, who performed their task with great severity and fabulous gain. It is estimated that only about one fifth of the amount collected ever reached the royal treasury.

Throughout this entire period, protests against excessive taxation form the refrain to all the complaints of the lower classes, only to fall on unheeding ears or to be answered with broken promises. Never was more than temporary mitigation of the burden given. In some places the people tried to evade the collectors by flight; in others, they met the armed violence of the taxgatherers with armed resistance. The year 1637 witnessed the rebellion of the *Croquants* (Poor Wretches) in Perigord and Saintonge, and of the *Nupieds* (Barefooted) in Normandy. We find the same open opposition, or perhaps more correctly, the same manifestation of the inability to meet the excessive demands of the state, among the inhabitants of Guienne, Clermont, Brioudes, Aurillac, Bordeaux, and, towards the middle of the century, practically throughout all France.

4. *Social France*

The population of France had been steadily on the increase since the Black Death (1348-1349, 1361-1362, 1369) and the Hundred Years' War (1337-1453). This increase is noticeable especially in the cities and more particularly in Paris. In 1448 the king complained of the solitude of the capital. A century later, the increase caused the State much concern. The king forbade the construction of new houses in the suburbs. Henry III (1574-1589) was the first king to make Paris his permanent abode. This attracted many to the capital. Many also sought refuge there during the horrors of the civil wars. The population is estimated as high as 550,000 at this time. Louis XIII, in different edicts, renewed the prohibition to build in and around Paris. He gave as his reasons that the over-population would render the necessary cleanliness impossible, new dwellings would attract undesirable persons to Paris, and building in the suburbs would destroy agriculture there.

Though feudalism lost its political significance with the firm establishment of the monarchy, still it continued to

wield a double influence socially. In the first place, serfdom, though in a mitigated and less burdensome form, remained in vogue in a number of the provinces until the French Revolution. Moreover, the social classes, as molded under feudalism, continued to exist along their broad lines: the clergy, the nobles, and the third estate. The latter we may subdivide into the rich *bourgeois* (merchants, landowners, and officeholders), the artisans, and the peasants. Some writers have even ventured to add the further classes of vagabonds and beggars, thieves, and prostitutes.

The clergy recruited their ranks from the other two classes. The higher ecclesiastical positions, however, were in the main reserved to the sons of nobles, while the more obscure and less desirable offices in city and country were generally assigned to ecclesiastics of plebeian extraction.

Nobility was determined in the first place by birth (the Nobility of the Sword). It could also be conferred by the king's patent, though the recipient was not considered quite on a level with the old nobility of many generations. There was another class of nobles distinctive of France, not considered equal in rank to the Nobles of the Sword, and forming a class between the *bourgeois* and the higher nobility. These were the Nobles of the Robe, the official class of certain ranks, ennobled by their office. The growth of such a class had been made easy by the sale of offices. Many acquired their titles in this latter way during the civil wars and during the first half of the seventeenth century. Many, too, had usurped the privileges of nobility.

The way was, therefore, open for the lowest citizen to take his place among the privileged classes. It was a question of winning out in the competitive struggle. The poor man, the rich *bourgeois*, the noble, were the three stages of the struggle. Material wealth was the determining factor. In times of peace, however, the central government endeavored to check this process and to abrogate all doubtful titles of nobility.

During the ministries of Richelieu and Mazarin, the state offices of finance, police and justice came to be almost exclusively in the hands of the rich *bourgeois*, the merchant burghers. This was principally due to the fact that they

were better able to buy them, while, at the same time, the state was glad to employ them as a wedge between the throne and the high nobility.

We may divide the social groups of France from another point of view into two large classes: those who were an economic burden and drain on the resources of the nation, and those who by personal effort or financial support contributed to the general well-being and prosperity of the country. To the latter belonged the peasants, artisans, merchant burghers and officeholders; to the former, those whom we find at the two extremes of the social scale: the beggars, thieves, and vagabonds on the one hand, and the high nobility on the other. These nobles, as a class, have been characterized as being at this period the most dangerous and useless portion of France's population. Their spirit of insubordination and their pretentions to lawless independence were alike inconsistent with the efficiency of the centralized government and detrimental to the prosperity of the people.

We may view the population of France at this period from still another angle and divide it into two further large classes: the rich and the poor. We find enormous wealth concentrated in the hands of the few, while the many pass through all the stages from moderate ease and comfort to extreme poverty and misery, with a preponderance towards the latter. Large numbers, whole districts, stood in need of relief.

Competition was ever the all-determining factor. The meager intervention of the state in industry and commerce did not substantially affect the situation. Unequals in natural gifts and in opportunity were compelled to compete for a livelihood. The struggle was inspired by frank selfishness and was carried on relentlessly.

Nor was this competition a respecter of persons. As the lowly could ascend to the heights of success, so, too, the mighty fell. All authors speak of the impoverished nobility at this period. The tax which the noble had formerly collected from his lands had for some time past gone to the royal treasury, leaving him the meager rent as his only land income. This, too, had fallen in value in consequence of the monetary revolution. In the meantime a class of the

bourgeois had enriched themselves by commerce and trade and outclassed him.

The poverty prevalent in France at this time was, therefore, no longer the plight of the individual. It was the plight of society. Much of it was the result of violated Christian justice and charity. The Church in her councils continued to encourage charity. But immorality, freedom of thought, weakening of faith and religious animosities, contributed to the decadence of charitable institutions. The religious wars had destroyed many hospitals. The adverse conditions multiplied the poor in greater numbers and more rapidly than the existing institutions could have provided for even in their most flourishing state. Contrary to the prescriptions of the Council of Vienne, a number of hospitals were still given as benefices. The revenues of monasteries, abbeys, and priories, a part of which was intended for the poor, went into private and undeserving hands.

At the same time, and in a much higher degree, the poverty can be laid to the charge of the state. Far from bolstering up its members at their weakest points by prudent legislation, restricting industrial competition for the benefit of all and regulating the accumulation of property; far from fostering mutually helpful relations, declaring and perpetuating ideals in which the sanctities of life are recognized, it was itself directly or indirectly the cause of much of the prevailing poverty. Its civil and foreign wars, frequently unjust and unnecessary, greatly crippled agriculture and commerce. These same wars and the shameful extravagance of the court exhausted the royal treasury and made exorbitant taxes inevitable. We detect a flagrant violation of social justice also in the unequal distribution of the latter. The state failed to protect the people against the devastations of the marauding soldiery, whose pay frequently consisted, in part at least, in the booty they could gather at the point of the sword from the peasants of the neighboring territory or from the inhabitants of a captured town. It failed to protect them against the raids of the "robber-knights," against the impositions and injustices of its petty officers, financial and judiciary. It itself acted high-handedly in the administration of justice.

The state endeavored to rid the realm of beggars by prohibiting mendicancy under the severest penalties, but it failed to take adequate measures to prevent it. The very frequency with which these prohibitions were enacted and rendered more severe is evident proof of their ineffectiveness.

The poor, we might say in general, made but little effort to help themselves. This is evidenced by the vast numbers of able-bodied men and women among the beggars and vagabonds. Perhaps they saw the futility of effort. Perhaps, too, they considered begging the easier, the more secure, and the more lucrative profession. We need hardly be surprised that, for example, the peasant refrained from special effort to better his condition when he had but little assurance in many cases that he, and not a marauder, would reap the fruits of his labors.

There was no organized effort to cope with the situation systematically. Relief was given individually and through the existing institutions but both, under the circumstances, were inadequate to the task. Owing to the vast numbers of the poor, the failure of the ecclesiastical institutions to offer adequate relief, and the new ideas brought in by the Reformation, the tendency was growing to secularize charity, i. e., to place a charitable institution entirely, or at least its temporal administration, into the hands of a responsible lay committee.

There were always zealous, self-sacrificing ecclesiastics and laymen who beheld with genuine sorrow the sad condition of the Church and of the poor. They exerted their every effort to effect a change, but their endeavors proved, if not entirely, at least for the most part, futile. They were greatly hampered by the refusal of the king to permit the promulgation of the reform decrees of the Council of Trent. The restoration of comparative peace and quiet at the end of the religious wars was followed by a more general and notable religious revival. It was not, however, even then the concerted effort of the Church of France, but remained the work of a few zealous, devoted individuals.

The keynote was struck by St. Francis of Sales (1567-1622), but the most active and influential was without doubt

St. Vincent de Paul. Intimately associated with him we find such illustrious and saintly men as Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629), founder of the French Congregation of the Oratory; Adrien Bourdoise (1584-1655), founder of the seminary and of the Community of Priests of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet; the Venerable Jean Eudes (1601-80), missionary and founder of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity; and Jean Jacques Olier (1608-57), founder of the seminary and the Society of Saint-Sulpice. Richelieu, too, seconded his efforts when his political interests permitted it, and took an active part in the reform of monasteries.

But perhaps the most conspicuous aspect of the movement was the immense energy and enthusiasm that were thrown into the field of active charity. The Catholic Church, always conscious of her obligations toward the poor and suffering, has seldom undertaken the task of charitable relief with greater zeal, devotion, and sacrifice than during the first half of the seventeenth century. Under the leadership of St. Vincent de Paul, or inspired by his brilliant example, or independently of his personal efforts, there sprang up a series of pious congregations, a system of relief organizations, well fitted to meet the demands of charity in all its varied aspects.

CHAPTER II

St. Vincent de Paul

1. *Biographical Sketch*

The little village of Pouy, officially called Saint-Vincent-de-Paul in honor of the Saint since 1828, in the province of Gascony, France, was the birth-place of St. Vincent de Paul. Until late years, 1576 was accepted without question as the year of his birth. Recent study, however, has established the year 1580 as the more probable.[1]

History has recorded very little concerning his parents apart from the fact that they were poor, simple, God-fearing peasants.[2] Vincent was the third of six children, four boys and two girls, and, like his brothers and sisters, passed his early years in the fields. He was employed particularly in guarding his father's flocks.

St. Vincent's father was not entirely disinterested in allowing the young boy to prepare for the priesthood. He was acquainted with a certain prior of the neighborhood, the son of a family no better placed than his, who contributed much to the advancement of his brothers through the revenues of his benefice. He hoped that Vincent would one day do the same. But in this he was disappointed, for in later years St. Vincent was ever steadfast in his refusal to employ his position, or divert any of the funds that passed through his hands, for the temporal promotion or relief of his relatives.

After spending four years with the Franciscans at Dax in the study of humanities, Vincent entered the service of M. de Commet, advocate of this city and judge of the district of Pouy, as private tutor while continuing his own studies. His theological studies, interrupted by a short

[1] Coste, *A quelle date saint Vincent de Paul est-il né?* in *Revue de Gascogne*, 1911.

[2] The particle *de* in the family name is no indication of nobility as far as is known. *Cf. Lettres de S. Vincent de Paul*, i., Paris, 1880, p. 11, n. 2.

stay at Saragossa, were made at Toulouse. Ordained to the priesthood in 1600, he was appointed to the pastorate of Tihl in his native diocese. He never took possession of this charge, but yielded his rights in favor of a competitor rather than have the dispute brought before the ecclesiastical courts. This left him free to continue his studies. He received the degree of Bachelor in Sacred Theology from the University of Toulouse, which entitled him to a chair in the university with faculties to explain and teach the Second Book of Sentences of Peter Lombard. (See pp. 26-7.)

At the beginning of the year 1605 he made a trip to Bordeaux, the purpose of which has never been revealed. But it probably concerned some ecclesiastical promotion that was offered him. He characterized it two years later as an affair which required great expense and which his temerity did not permit him to mention.[3]

He found upon his return to Toulouse that he had become heir to some landed property and furniture through the generosity of an old lady who had held him in high esteem. A debtor, who owed three to four hundred crowns to this estate, had fled to Marseilles to evade prosecution. Vincent, advised by his friends and in need of money to defray the expenses contracted at Bordeaux, determined to follow him.

He recovered three hundred crowns from his debtor and prepared to return by land to Toulouse. He was persuaded, however, to accompany a friend by sea as far as Narbonne. Their ship was overpowered by Turkish pirates, following a fray in which St. Vincent was injured, and taken to Tunis, where the passengers were sold into slavery at public auction. Vincent was forced into the service of a fisherman, but being unable to accustom himself to life at sea, he was soon sold to an aged alchemist. He was now compelled to heat ten or twelve furnaces, but his new master was kind and humane and conceived a great liking for him, initiating him into the secrets of his trade and imparting to him some knowledge of medicine. St. Vincent expressly states that he learned from him a cure for gallstones.[4]

[3] *Lett.*, i. 4, No. 1, To M. de Commet, July 24, 1607.
[4] *Ibid.*, 6.

After a year the old alchemist died and left St. Vincent to his nephew, who, in turn, sold him to a renegade Christian. This latter proved a cruel master and sent Vincent to work on his lands in the barren mountains, where the heat was all but unbearable. After almost another year's servitude Vincent converted the renegade and escaped with him to France in 1607.

On returning to France, he went to the papal vice legate at Avignon, whom he accompanied to Rome. Here he continued his studies. He was sent back to France in 1609 on a secret mission to Henry IV, the import of which has ever been a matter of conjecture. He fulfilled his mission faithfully and retired immediately into seclusion. He obtained lodging in the suburb of Saint-Germain. While here he assisted in the nursing of the sick in the newly established Hospital of Charity, and made the acquaintance of some of the officials of Queen Marguerite of Valois. At their recommendation, he was appointed almoner to the queen. About the same time he was appointed by the king to the little abbacy of Saint-Léonard-de-Chaume. But so far as is known he never took personal possession of this latter charge.

Desiring, on the contrary, to lead a life apart from the world, he took up his abode with the Oratorians, a society of secular priests recently organized in France by the saintly de Bérulle. After a two years' sojourn here, de Bérulle, whom St. Vincent had learned to love and revere as a father, obtained his appointment as pastor of Clichy, then an insignificant parish on the outskirts of Paris.

This charge was more in conformity with his wishes. He devoted himself whole-heartedly to the welfare of his flock. His stay, however, was of short duration. Again at the solicitation of Père de Bérulle, he entered the service of Emmanuel de Gondi, Count of Joigny and General of the Galley Slaves, as private tutor to his children. He became at the same time the spiritual director of Mme. de Gondi. With her assistance he began to give missions on her estates. But, in order to escape the honor and esteem that accrued to him from his successes, as also because he considered Mme. de Gondi's excessive dependence on him in spiritual

matters a fault in her, he left the noble family in July, 1617, under the pretext of making a little voyage. With the approval of Père de Bérulle, he sought appointment as parish priest of Châtillon-les-Dombes, called to-day Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, in the eastern part of France. Here he reformed the clergy, led several Protestants back to the Church, and founded his first conference of charity for the assistance of the needy sick.

But M. and Mme. de Gondi would not rest until they and their friends had prevailed upon Vincent to return to them after an absence of only five months. Vincent profited by his experiences. He had learned during his former stay with the Gondis the immense amount of good that could be effected through the missions among the people; he had also learned while at Châtillon-les-Dombes the blessings of the conferences of charity. He accordingly resumed the peasant missions on the Gondi estates and established a conference of charity after each mission whenever possible. Several zealous and learned priests of Paris, won by his example, joined him and assisted him in his missions and charitable activities.

M. de Gondi, witnessing the remarkable fruits of Vincent's efforts, wished to have the galley slaves under his jurisdiction participate in the same blessings. He accordingly induced the king to appoint St. Vincent royal almoner of the galleys (1619). St. Vincent visited the prisoners at Paris, Marseilles, and Bordeaux and did much for their temporal and spiritual amelioration. (Cf. pp. 235-43.) His most reliable biographers attest the fact that he even took the place of a galley slave and served in chains for several weeks before being discovered and released.[5]

He founded the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission in 1625 and, nine years later, the Daughters of Charity. He assisted at the death of Louis XIII in 1643, and in the

[5] Abelly, *La vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, Paris, 1664, last ed. Paris, 1891, iii., 162; Collet, *Vie de S. Vincent de Paul*, Nancy, 1748, English trans. Baltimore, 1845, 53; Maynard, *Saint Vincent de Paul, sa vie, son temps*, Paris, 1850-74, iii., ch. i. For recent discussion of the question, *cf.* Coste, *St. Vincent de Paul a-t-il pris à Marseille les fers d'un forçat?* in *Revue de Gascogne*, 1910.

same year was appointed to the Council of Conscience[6] by the queen regent, Anne of Austria. His remaining days were occupied in organizing, stabilizing, and directing his many works of charity which form the subject of the following pages. He died Sept. 27, 1660, and was canonized by Pope Clement XII June 16, 1737. Pope Leo XIII on May 12, 1885, declared him the universal patron of Catholic charities.

2. *Characteristics*

The characteristic traits of St. Vincent de Paul have all been depicted more or less fully and more or less skillfully by his many biographers. In conformity with the single purpose of this study, therefore, I have merely endeavored in the following pages to stress those of his qualities and virtues which have some bearing on his social activities and on his relations with his fellow men. In doing so, I have, wherever possible, allowed him to portray his character in his own words and works. I have gone somewhat into detail, especially when treating points of character not commonly emphasized in his biographies, in the hope that a more thorough knowledge of the man will lead to a better understanding of his works.

There was nothing in the exterior appearance of St. Vincent de Paul to attract the attention of the casual observer. As pictured by his first biographer and represented by his earliest portrait,[7] he was of medium height and well-proportioned. His head was rather fleshy and large but well formed in relation to the rest of his body. His forehead was broad and majestic, his nose strongly aquiline. His hearing was sharp, his look kind and mild but keen and penetrating.

He was far from being the strong and healthy man that

[6] A council established by Anne of Austria after the death of Louis XIII for consultation in ecclesiastical matters. It was composed of the Minister Cardinal Mazarin, St. Vincent and two others. It was dissolved after an existence of only a few years.

[7] Vincent ever stubbornly refused to pose for a portrait. Even his confrères had lost hopes of conquering his repugnance and resorted to a ruse. They invited the painter, Simon François, to come to Saint-Lazare and as he sat among the retreatants he studied the features of the Saint. Retiring then to his room, he committed them to canvas. Abelly, i., 114.

his robust exterior would suggest.[8] His naturally vigorous constitution had been weakened by the sufferings of his captivity, his mortified and penitential life, his labors on the missions, and by his constant application under all conditions of weather and climate to works of charity. He was very sensitive to atmospheric changes and influences and was, in consequence, subject to frequent attacks of fever.[9] In the fray which preceded his capture by the pirates in 1605, he received an arrow wound, which, as he wrote two years later, would serve him as an hour-glass[10] for the rest of his life. He fell seriously ill during his stay with the Gondi family and never entirely recuperated. He was troubled with swollen legs ever after. This affliction became worse and more painful as years went by, and others were added. He found himself compelled, much against his wishes, to make his visits of charity and calls of duty on horseback or by carriage from the time that he took up his residence at Saint-Lazare in 1632, 28 years before his death.

Though ever solicitous for the health and physical well-being of those under his charge, he was neglectful of his own. He made light of his maladies and preferred them at times to the remedies prescribed by his physician. In spite of sleepless nights and consequent weakness during his fever attacks, he refused to remain in the infirmary and insisted on rising with the community at four o'clock, omitting none of his usual spiritual exercises and going about his daily affairs and strenuous occupations as though in perfect health.

During these times, however, in spite of himself, he would frequently succumb to sleep while giving audiences in the course of the day and at times even in the presence of prominent personages. Much embarrassed, he would conceal the real cause of his weakness and attribute it with his

[8] I have deemed it unnecessary to mention sources in confirmation of facts in St. Vincent's life commonly found in his biographies. The biographical data incorporated in the present work can be found in the biographies by Abelly, Collet, and Maynard (*Cf. Bibliography*), when no special reference is given.

[9] He repeatedly makes mention of his fever in his letters, especially to Mlle. le Gras.

[10] *Horloge,* possibly used in the sense of *barometer. Lett.,* i., 5, No. 1, To M. de Commet, July 24, 1607.

usual humility to his misery. He bore his sufferings at all times with remarkable patience and calm resignation to the will of God.

St. Vincent had by nature a passionate temperament and lively disposition. As he himself confesses, he gave way a little at times to his bilious and melancholy nature while with the Gondi family, but when he learned that God had called him to live a community life where he had to meet, and deal with, people of all dispositions, he prayed God to grant him a kind and gentle temper. And, as he humbly adds, by the grace of God and with a little care he succeeded to some extent in laying aside his gloomy nature.[11] He succeeded so well, in fact, that, as he was accustomed to say, he used harsh words when reprehending and correcting others but three times in his life, and his admirers considered him second only to St. Francis de Sales, his contemporary, in meekness and gentleness.

Meekness, however, was by no means identical with weakness in the character of Vincent de Paul. Heedless alike of the favor or hatred of men, he was guided solely by the justice of the case when there was question of right and wrong. He epitomized his policy in this regard when he one day told the members of his Congregation that he would "prefer to be bound hand and foot and thrown among burning coals than to perform an act to please men."[12] "One must not be solicitous to please nor fear to displease," he told the Daughters of Charity. "Provided you acquit yourselves well of your duty, there is no need of being troubled."[13] He refused to have an abbacy assigned to the infant son of the Secretary of State.[14] In spite of vigorous protests on the part of a nobleman who wished to have his incompetent daughter succeed to the office of abbess in a certain convent, he prevented it, though the office had by abuse become practically hereditary in the family. Casting aside all human prudence and risking the displeasure of Richelieu, he one day approached the all-powerful minister, laid bare the dire distress of the

[11] Abelly, iii., 245.
[12] *Ibid.*, 46.
[13] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vincent de P. (Supplément)*, 352.
[14] *Lett.*, i., 499, No. 434. To M. d'Horgny at Rome, July 16, 1645.

people and the disorders and crimes resulting from the war, and begged him to end it all by procuring peace for France.

St. Vincent was in no wise imperious or overbearing in his relations with his subjects. The youngest lay brother of his Congregation could approach him with the same frankness and confidence as could one of the superiors. Instead of issuing his commands outright, he preferred, sometimes with lengthy argumentation, to convince his subjects of the reasonableness or necessity of a special course of action which he expected them to pursue.[15]

He was kind, affable, respectful, and considerate towards all. In spite of his many labors, he was ever disposed to receive and listen to those who called on him, whatever their mission. He received with equal attention and affability the rich and the poor, the high and the lowly. If he was in any way partial, it was rather in favor of the lowly and afflicted. His respect for the poor was, in fact, almost a veneration. It was a respect so deeply founded on conviction that, far from abating because of his daily and familiar contact with poverty and misery, at times the most squalid and repulsive, it increased with years. "As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me"[16] was for him no empty figure of speech, not merely a lofty ideal, but a stern reality, an ever-present, impelling, and directing force in his alleviation of stricken humanity. He beheld in the sick and poor his own suffering Savior and treated them with a corresponding tenderness.

An event well worthy of note as showing the depths of Vincent's respectful consideration for the poor and manifesting to what extremes his sympathy for them went, occurred one day upon his return from the city. At the door of Saint-Lazare he met some poor women who begged an alms. He promised to grant it, but, entering the house, he was distracted by other important matters and allowed it to escape his memory. When reminded of it some time later, he went immediately to the parlor, apologized on his

[15] *Cf. Ibid.*, 84, No. 73, To M. du Coudray at Rome, Feb. 16, 1634; *Lett.*, iii., 373, No. 1309, To a Bro. of the Mission at Agen, Nov. 11, 1656; *Ibid.*, 540, No. 1453, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, Aug. 24, 1657.

[16] Matt. 25.40.

knees for having made them wait, and gave them the alms they needed.

St. Vincent began at an early age to give tangible expression to the promptings of his naturally generous and sympathetic heart. If he met a poor man when returning from the mill whither his father had sent him for flour, he would open the sack and give him several handfuls. It is particularly related of him that, when twelve or thirteen years of age, having gradually laid aside thirty sous, a considerable sum for that time, he gave it all to a poor man in great distress.

In later years his active charity was as general and as universal as is the foundation on which it rested—the love of God. It was all-embracing. He consecrated his energies to the spiritual and moral amelioration of the poor ignorant people of the country. He encouraged and fostered the establishment of elementary schools. As for corporal relief, there was no disease, no distress, that failed to strike a responsive chord in his generous heart. Neither nationality, nor creed,[17] nor social rank and status, formed a barrier to his charitable zeal. He had regard for the poor journeyman tailor who applied to him by mail from a distant village for a few needles no less than for the extreme misery of a devastated province. His charity went out to the poor beggar at his door as well as to the impoverished population of war-torn frontiers and to the needy of foreign lands.

Vincent was slow and reluctant, however, to open up new fields of charitable activity on his own initiative. In his humility he distrusted his own judgment and was fearful

[17] Feillet (*La misère au temps de la Fronde, etc.*, 239, n.) says on this point: "We seize this occasion to make reparation for the reproach of intolerance which, on a text wrongly understood, we addressed to Vincent de Paul in our work in the *Revue de Paris;* a much more serious study of the epoch, a more intimate knowledge of the Saint which the reading of all his unedited letters has given us, has convinced us entirely that Vincent in the presence of misfortune never inquired to what religion one belonged. We have found in the archives of the Mission a letter which leaves no doubt concerning the broad tolerance of the Saint." The letter referred to is undoubtedly that of April 26, 1651, addressed to M. Coglée, the superior at Sedan. This priest of the Mission had asked if he could extend the distribution of alms to the Huguenots of the devastated frontiers as well as to the Catholics. St. Vincent, answering before he had an opportunity of proposing the matter to the Ladies of Charity, wrote as follows: "I shall be glad if the Ladies order it as you propose. . . ." *Lett.*, ii., 329-30, No. 789.

of self-deception, especially when there was question of discerning the designs of God in some extraordinary undertaking. The conviction was ever before his mind that he was a creature and, as such, necessary or useful only in so far as his Creator willed; that of himself he was powerless, that he required literally at every breath the assistance of God, and that any interference or precipitation on his part, especially in works more intimately relating to God's service, would lead to failure rather than to success.

Thus we find that some of his greatest works were conceived and forced upon him by others. The Congregation of the Mission owes its foundation in reality to the ingenuity and persistence of Mme. de Gondi. The retreats for the candidates for the priesthood were suggested by the bishops of Beauvais and Paris. A young priest proposed the Tuesday Conferences.[18] Louis XIII inaugurated the work among the Christian captives. The missionary activities on the Island of Madagascar resulted from the appointment of the Papal Nuncio.[19] Mme. Goussault succeeded in persuading St. Vincent to organize the Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu only after enlisting the aid and sympathy of the archbishop of Paris. Perhaps, the only instances where St. Vincent took the initiative were the establishing of the first conference of charity at Châtillon-les-Dombes, the caring of the foundlings, and the starting of the Old Folks' Home.

St. Vincent was, therefore, not an inventive but an organizing and directing genius. He gained a place among the greatest expositors of Christian charity by his admirable ability to translate into practicable form the ideas of others, of organizing and stabilizing associations of charity as also by his inimitable faculty of inspiring others with a holy, self-sacrificing enthusiasm, and of encouraging them to persevere in a work once undertaken even in the face of seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

A very striking trait everywhere evident in St. Vincent's

[18] *Lett., i.,* 77, No. 64, To M. du Coudray at Rome, July 5, 1633. These conferences were composed of a number of zealous priests of the secular clergy of Paris who bound themselves voluntarily to meet every Tuesday at Saint-Lazare to confer on the virtues and duties of their state of life.

[19] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.,* 239.

active life is his broadmindedness or absence of all that could be interpreted as jealousy or exclusiveness. Though undoubtedly the most prominent and enthusiastic dispenser of Christian charity of his time, having at his command the best equipped organization, enjoying the favor of the royal court and the unbounded confidence of the people, and being for a time the royally appointed almoner of Picardy and Champagne, still he never for a moment thought that he enjoyed any monopoly of charitable works. He never dreamt of subordinating other associations to his direction, or of attempting to exclude them from the field. On the contrary, he cordially welcomed and encouraged every effort that tended to relieve the spiritual, intellectual, or material distress of the age.

He beheld the misery around him. Its alleviation was his one great desire. By whom it was accomplished was to him in his humility and disinterestedness a matter of indifference. "I praise God," he writes in one of his letters,[20] "that He finds fit to raise up in this country so many good and holy souls for the assistance of the poor people, and I beseech Him with all my heart to bless the designs of these saintly ecclesiastics and to lead them to success for His glory." A society of priests for the conducting of missions was organized on the plan of St. Vincent's. He encouraged the undertaking and congratulated its author.[21] The Papal Nuncio asked him on one occasion if he in any way objected to the Fathers of the Christian Doctrine, whose purpose was similar to that of his Congregation. "I answered him," he wrote later,[22] "that, far from causing us pain, we shall be very glad that both these and many other religious and priests should be employed, as is becoming, for the instruction and salvation of the people." He even went so far as to ask "our Savior, not only that He bless the intentions and the works of these new missionaries [against whom some opposition had arisen], but also that, if He see that

[20] *Lett.,* i., 82-3, No. 70, To M. du Coudray at Rome, Jan. 17, 1634. *Cf.* also *Lett.,* iii., 467, No. 1391, To M. Levazeux, Supr. at Annecy, June 1, 1657; *Lett.,* iv., 571, No. 2043, To M. Desdames, Supr. at Warsaw, June 18, 1660.

[21] *Lett.,* i., 94, No. 86, M. de Fonteneil, Dec. 7, 1634.

[22] *Lett.,* iv., 287, No. 1802, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome, Mar. 14, 1659.

they are to do better" than the Congregation of the Mission, He destroy the latter and preserve the former.[23]

He also cautioned his men against jealousy and envy towards other religious communities, telling them rather to be lavish in approving their good works. He praised the missionary and charitable activities of Père Eudes and his men,[24] eulogized Père Bourdoise and his efforts for ecclesiastical reform,[25] rejoiced at the success of the Oratorians,[26] and frequently expressed his joy at the success of the Jesuits.[27] He allowed one of his best missionaries to spend some time with those of another society and permitted one of these latter to witness missions given by his men with the express purpose of giving them an opportunity of learning and adopting his methods.[28]

Still, we must not imagine that St. Vincent was indifferent to the origin and progress of new organizations to such an extent as to jeopardize the existence and prosperity of his own. He even requested and obtained from the Holy See a prohibition against the organization of secular priests into societies that would be prejudicial to him.[29] There are several instances where he strenuously objected to another company assuming the same name as his own. This, he said, would cause useless confusion and militate against his Congregation.[30] A dispute arose between his Company and the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament over a will caused by the similarity of names. Vincent refused to yield until certain that the opposing parties were the beneficiaries designated.[31]

Closely allied to St. Vincent's reluctance to open up new fields of activity and to the absence of jealousy in his dis-

[23] *Lett.*, iii., 530, No. 1443, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome.
[24] *Lett.*, iv., 570, No. 2043, M. Desdames, Supr. at Warsaw, June 18, 1660.
[25] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 88, No. 39, July 18, 1655.
[26] *Lett.*, iii., 417, No. 1341, To M. Get, Supr. at Marseilles, Feb. 9, 1657.
[27] *Lett.*, iv., 526, 527, No. 1997, to M. Barry, Supr. at Notre Dame de Lorme, Jan. 4, 1660; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de P. (Suppl.)*, 120, No. 3099, To a Priest of the Mission, June 14, 1656.
[28] *Lett.*, i., 65-6, No. 51, To M. du Coudray at Rome, July 12, 1632.
[29] *Lett.*, ii., 366, No. 825, To the Sacred Congregation, Dec. 10, 1651; *Ibid.*, 374, No. 830, Dec. 21, 1651; *cf.* also, *v.g.*, *Lett.*, iii., 594, No. 1492, To M. l'Abbé de Saint-Just, Grand Vicar of Lyons, Oct. 5, 1657.
[30] *V.g.*, *Lett.*, iii., 370, No. 1306, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome, Oct. 27, 1656.
[31] *Ibid.*, 495, No. 1415, To M. Get, Supr. at Marseilles, July 13, 1657.

position, was his unobtrusiveness. He ever carefully refrained from interfering with or, trespassing upon, the activities of others. He firmly declined, for example, to interfere in the affairs of the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris at the suggestion of Mme. Goussault. This hospital had as spiritual and temporal directors and administrators persons whom he considered wise and capable enough to introduce the necessary regulations of reform. Only the orders of the Archbishop of Paris could prevail upon him to take steps in the matter. At the command of the queen regent, Vincent sent some of his priests to conduct a mission at Fontainebleau. Contrary to expectation, they found a religious preaching there at the same time. They opened the mission in deference to the queen's wishes but arranged their plan of exercises so as not to interfere with the other's preaching. The people, however, flocked in great numbers to hear the missionaries while the attendance at the sermons of the religious soon became negligible. This occasioned dissatisfaction and the religious protested. The missionaries, doubting whether they should obey the queen and continue the mission, or follow the rule of St. Vincent in such circumstances and retire, referred the matter to Vincent. The latter dispatched a messenger to the queen explaining the matter and begging her permission to recall his men. She granted the request, and St. Vincent immediately assigned his missionaries to other fields of labor.

He would do nothing in a diocese without the consent of the bishop nor in a parish without that of the parish priest. And even though he had been commissioned by the bishop to give missions throughout his diocese, he invariably obtained the consent of the individual pastors before proceeding. He expressly forbade his missionaries "even to move a straw without their consent."[32] He instructed Mlle. le Gras to retrench her activities at the pleasure of the Bishop of Châlon, and to retire entirely if he so desired.[33] He did not want his Daughters of Charity to nurse the sick soldiers in the hospital at Arras, because, on the one hand,

[32] Abelly, iii., 318; and *passim* in *Lettres*, etc.
[33] *Lett.*, i., 45, No. 33, Sept. 15, 1631; *Ibid.*, 52, No. 39, Oct. 31, 1631.

there were capable and willing religious assigned to the task, and, on the other, his Sisters had been sent thither to nurse the *abandoned* sick.[34]

Another manifestation of his unaggressiveness is seen when confronted with a dispute or legal claim. He always preferred to withdraw from a quarrel and refrain from court-proceedings even at the cost of considerable personal loss unless the honor of God, the rights of others, or the duties of charity were involved. And even when higher obligations demanded the prosecution of rightful claims, he had recourse to lawsuits only after all attempts to arrive at an amicable settlement by mutual agreement, arbitration, or compromise had proven futile.[35]

It was this spirit of reserve and unaggressiveness, this reluctance to intervene and readiness to withdraw, united with his quiet, unostentatious method of procedure and preference for the humble, neglected, abandoned portions of the field of charity that contributed largely to St. Vincent's remarkable success. For in this way, far from arousing jealousies, or causing friction, or antagonizing other agencies, institutions, or individuals, he gained their sympathy for his cause, won their good will, and enlisted their aid and coöperation.

St. Vincent loved to style himself a poor scholar of the fourth class, but, in reality, his mental ability would undoubtedly have procured for him an enviable position among the intellectual lights of his day had he chosen to consecrate his efforts to a career of study. He was well talented by nature and fond of his books. From the beginning he made rapid progress in his studies. He devoted sixteen years to intense study in the elementary school of the village of Dax and in the Universities of Saragossa and Toulouse. He attained the Licentiate in Canon Law[36] and the Baccalaureate

[34] *Lett.*, iv., 18, No. 1597, To M. Delville, Priest of the Mission of Arras, Feb. 1, 1658.

[35] *Cf. e.g.*, Abelly, iii., 387; *Lett.*, ii., 479, No. 907, To M. l'Abbé de Chandenier, Sept. 15, 1652; *Lett.*, iii., 278, No. 1236, To M. Rivet, Priest of the Mission at Saintes, May 14, 1656.

[36] He makes use of this title (*e.g.*, *Lett.*, i., 19, No. 7, April 11, 1627), but there is no record telling us when or where he received it.

in Sacred Theology.[37] This latter title empowered him to teach publicly the Second Book of Peter Lombard's *Sentences* in the University of Toulouse. As far as is known, however, he never made use of the privilege.

But had Jansenism not threatened the Church of France at this period, we should probably have no definite record of the depth and soundness of Vincent's theological learning. It was only his love for the Church and his zeal for souls, both of which were jeopardized by these errors, that prompted him to lay aside his wonted reserve and aversion of all that savored of display of knowledge, and to raise his voice and wield his pen in defense of the truth.[38] He saw through the errors and sophistries of the innovators and vindicated the truth with a clearness and precision that won for him the esteem and admiration of his contemporaries. The bishops of France respectfully heeded his warnings and procured from the Holy See an official condemnation of the Jansenistic errors. Several learned doctors submitted to him their writings against the new doctrine for revision and correction before publishing them.

The words and writings of St. Vincent show evidences of a mind eminently capable of understanding a subject in all its phases and relations, and of arranging and propounding it in a lucid, logical and systematic manner. In a series of discourses the introduction to each consisted as a rule in a brief resumé of the preceding. He would then propose the plan of the present treatise, which usually comprised three points. His favorite ones were answers to the questions what, why and how. For example, his conference of May 13, 1659, to the members of his Congregation treated of "Uniformity in Community Life." He first gives a definition of this uniformity, proceeds to adduce reasons for its practice, and concludes by proposing means for its attainment.[39]

[37] The *Gallia Christiana* attributes to him also the title of Doctor of Sacred Theology. We have, however, no reliable evidence for it. The authentic attestation issued by the University of Toulouse in 1664 (4 years after Vincent's death) makes mention of the Baccalaureate only. Abelly, i., 27.

[38] He was a member of the Council of Conscience at this time and also in this capacity felt it his duty to act.

[39] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 441, No. 105; *cf.* also, *v.g.*, *ibid.*, pp. 340, 354, 400.

One of St. Vincent's most characteristic traits was his consummate prudence. His contemporaries commonly acknowledged him as a man of superior judgment. People of all walks and callings of life—eminent and learned bishops, magistrates, noblemen, pastors of souls, doctors, religious, superiors of religious communities, all flocked to him and sought his advice on a wide range of subjects. Anne of Austria, the queen regent, appointed him to the Council of Conscience. The illustrious Guillaume de Lamoignon, the First President of the Parliament, consulted him as a superior mind not only in matters of conscience, but also in secular affairs. The Nuncios Bagni and Piccolomini sought his advice on different occasions concerning important ecclesiastical matters. There was scarcely a religious affair treated in Paris without his participation or counsel.

Vincent de Paul was eminently fitted to form an unbiased opinion on matters submitted to his judgment. His natural gifts of mind enabled him to discern circumstances and difficulties otherwise easily overlooked. His perfect detachment from all things earthly precluded the influence of selfish interests. His command over his passions and feelings preserved him from hasty decisions. His utter disregard for human considerations permitted him to rise superior to human respect; he would only ask himself: "What will I wish to have advised when I come to die?" or "What would our Lord have said or done under these circumstances?"[40] More than this, diffident of his own faculties, he did not hesitate to consult others and would always seek light and direction from God. "Where human prudence fails and sees nothing, there the light of divine wisdom begins to dawn," is one of his sayings.[41] He opened and read his important letters and pondered over delicate and difficult matters before the Blessed Sacrament.

He was very insistent on acquainting himself with all details before venturing an advice or making a decision. "Be assured," he writes in one of his letters,[42] "you can

[40] Abelly, iii., 461, 496.

[41] *Ibid.*, 344.

[42] *Lett.*, i., 529, No. 459, To M. Bourdet, Supr. at Saint-Méen, June 29, 1646.

allege no reason which I have not considered." And again he writes:[43] "Having considered the matter in all its circumstances, I will tell you plainly, etc." In settling disputes, too, he heard both sides of the difficulty and insisted on the necessity of considering whatever might favor the opposing party, just as though he were present to plead his own cause in person.

We frequently find him suspending judgment on some particular point until further and more detailed information was forthcoming. We may cite the following as being fairly typical of the many cases found in his letters: "I do not know what to tell you concerning the little church of Saint-Jean since you do not mention the price."[44] "You should have told me the reasons *pro* and *con* so that I might pass judgment."[45] "Since you fail to say sufficiently in detail how it happened, I cannot pass judgment."[46] A missionary had asked if it were proper for a priest having a knowledge of medicine, to attend the sick of the place during a mission. "I ought to know," St. Vincent answered,[47] "who this is, what the remedies are that he makes, and for what kind of sickness; I beg you to tell me this before I answer you." A priory had been offered to his brethren in Alsace. He wrote in answer: "Before considering this proposition, it is necessary to know the name and place of the priory offered; of what order, what the revenue and what the charges; on whom it depends; if there are religious there, buildings, etc."[48]

Far from being conceited or self-reliant in forming his judgments, St. Vincent eagerly sought the views of others and welcomed their suggestions and criticisms. "Be assured, sir," he writes,[49] "I do nothing without the advice of the consultors whom the Congregation has given me." "I shall send you the constitution of [the conference of] charity . . . ," he says in one of his letters to Mlle. le

[43] *Ibid.*, 162, No. 160, Feb. 23, 1637.
[44] *Ibid.*, 290, No. 275, To M. le Breton at Rome, Feb. 26, 1640.
[45] *Ibid.*, 381, No. 338, To M. Codoing, Supr. at Annecy, Dec. 7, 1641.
[46] *Ibid.*, 521, No. 454, To M. Delattre, Supr. at Cahors, April 19, 1646.
[47] *Lett.*, iii., 530, No. 1443, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome, Aug. 17, 1657.
[48] *Ibid.*, 611, No. 1500, To M. Desjardins, Supr. at Toul, Oct. 6, 1657.
[49] *Lett.*, i., 529, No. 459, To M. Bourdet, Supr. at Saint-Méen, June 29, 1646.

Gras.[50] "You will look at it, and if there be anything to eliminate or add, tell me, if you please."

Among his announcements at a meeting of the Ladies of Charity, we find that he will "have it announced from the pulpit by the preachers that those who have any good advice for this good work [the charitable undertakings of the Ladies at Paris] report to the room of the Daughters [of Charity] of the Hôtel-Dieu, Saturday at two o'clock or to Mme. de Lamoignon [the president of the Ladies]."[51] When relieving the war-torn provinces, he made no disposition of alms without the advice and consent of the benefactors—the Ladies of Charity and the queen. He saw the necessity of a wholesome vacation for the students, but wished first to know the methods of the Jesuits, Oratorians and Theatines in this matter.[52] He drew up the plan of the exercises for those to be ordained, in consultation with the "Bishops of Boulogne and Alet, M. l'Abbé Olier and some other persons."[53] In drafting the rule of his Congregation he consulted some of the most learned doctors of Paris and experienced men of other religious orders; he submitted tentative copies to ten members of the Congregation assembled in council, all men of experience and sound judgment, that they might correct, add, tone down, or eliminate as they deemed fit. The matter was then referred to a committee of five for more detailed study and consideration and finally, after nine years of further waiting, it was again submitted to a general assembly of thirteen superiors and elders for final criticism and adoption.[54]

He did not consider it beneath the dignity of his office as superior general to confer even with the lay brothers of his Congregation and take their advice on points which affected their offices. He assures us that he frequently did so and adds that "when this is done with the requisite precautions, the authority of God, which resides in the

[50] *Ibid.*, 37, No. 24, May 31, 1631.

[51] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de P. (Suppl.)*, 225.

[52] *Lett.*, iv., 460, No. 1936, To M. Pesnelle, Supr. at Genoa, Sept. 5, 1659.

[53] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 495-6.

[54] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de P. (Suppl.)*, 255-6, 258, 278-9; *Lett.*, i., 425, No. 368, To M. Codoing at Rome, Oct. 24, 1642; *Lett.*, iii., 204-5, No. 1167, To M. Jolly, Oct. 29, 1655; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congreg.*, 365.

person of the superiors and in those who represent them, receives no detriment; on the contrary, the good order which results renders it more worthy of love and respect."[55]

Still he did not believe in endless consultation and debate. At the general assembly convoked in the summer of 1651 and presided over by St. Vincent in person, the rule of the Congregation had long formed the topic of discussion. At the last session of which we have a record, the question arose whether or not the rule should again be read. The minutes tell us[56] "it was resolved that they should be re-read by two or three only; still that all should sign them. The reason is that it is with the rules as with the hands,—the more one washes them the more one finds to wash; or as the chickens that always find something to pick in a place where they pass a hundred times." In a previous session of the same meeting[57] St. Vincent advises curtness and precision in the deliberations. "Two or three reasons," he says, "go to substantiate a thing; more, obscure it. It is useful to consult two or three lawyers on a question; if more, they muddle it; the same with physicians . . . Otherwise one loses much time; there are dangerous consequences and evil effects."

But if St. Vincent showed humility of judgment in consulting the views of others, he showed still greater humility in proposing his own opinion. He never urged it, never tried to force it upon others. "Perhaps we shall do well to act so and so," "as it seems to me," or, "if you find it good to make use of these means, there is reason to believe that God will bless them"—these and similar terms he employed to express his views, carefully avoiding forceful words and whatever might even insinuate self-sufficiency or presumption of thought. He was never known to say peremptorily, "I advise you to do so and so."[58] This policy was rooted ultimately, no doubt, in his humble, diffident nature. He tells us[59] he acquired it from Cardinal de Bérulle and had learned from his dealings with men that it was the most effective.

[55] *Lett.*, ii., 251, No. 720, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, July 9, 1650.
[56] *Lett. et Conférences de S. Vinc. de P. (Suppl.)*, 276, Aug. 9, 1651.
[57] *Ibid.*, 269-70, July 7, 1651.
[58] Abelly, iii., 459.
[59] *Lett.*, iv., 510, No. 1984, To M. Cabel, Supr. at Sedan, Dec. 17, 1659.

He once expressed his views on the assignment of certain Daughters of Charity, but concluded by telling Mlle. le Gras to act as she deemed fit.[60] He had in vain advised Mazarin, the prime minister, to avert the civil dissensions that culminated in the disturbances of the Fronde. Writing of his futile attempt, he said: "I try to speak them (my words) after the manner of the good angels who propose without troubling themselves when their inspirations go unheeded."[61] While a member of the Council of Conscience he spoke his mind freely and fearlessly when asked or when duty demanded, but then held his peace and entrusted the outcome to the providence of God. He discussed a matter of inheritance with a superior of the Congregation and suggested what he considered the most advisable. He ended with the words: "But know, sir, I only propose all this . . . If you disapprove of my views as I declare them, by all means disregard them."[62] He traced the route which he earnestly desired Mlle. le Gras to follow on her visitation of the establishments in the country; but left her the liberty to change it as she thought fit.[63]

Reproached on one occasion by one of the Ladies of Charity for too readily yielding his own opinions though always the best, he answered in all humility, "Madame, God forbid that my poor thoughts should prevail over those of others! I am well pleased when God acts without me, who am only a miserable wretch."[64] After relating to Mme. de Chantal the mode of life in detail as led by the Priests of the Mission, he continued: "Do us the favor, for the love of our Lord, of giving us your opinion on it, if you please, and you can believe that I shall receive it as coming from God."[65] He had been forced by his maladies during his later years to make his trips in a carriage. He expressed his willingness to discontinue at the advice of one of the brethren.[66] He proposed the *pros* and *cons* for the holding of a general

[60] *Lett.*, ii., 143, No. 632.
[61] *Lett.*, iv., 2, 1579, To Mlle. le Gras, Sept. 5, 1648.
[62] *Lett.*, ii., 242, No. 711, To M. Thibaut, Supr. at Saint-Méen, April 12, 1650.
[63] *Lett.*, i., 42, No. 29, Sept., 1631.
[64] Abelly, iii., 284.
[65] *Lett.*, i., 257, No. 244, To Mme. de Chantal, July 14, 1639.
[66] *Lett.*, ii., 364, No. 823, To M. Gilles, Supr. at Crécy, Nov. 28, 1651.

meeting of the Ladies of Charity, but left the decision entirely to the plurality of their votes.[67] He acted similarly when the question arose whether they should elect new officers or request the old ones to continue in office.[68]

Though he was never known to contradict or contest a statement, even when the discussion concerned difficult and disputed points, still when the service or glory of God was at stake, he was firm and unrelenting, refusing at times for years to grant certain things demanded of him. "As much condescension as you wish, provided God be not offended" was his principle in this matter.[69]

St. Vincent not only practised humility of judgment; he also demanded it in all its phases of those under his charge or direction. "O my brethren," he said on one occasion to the members of his Congregation,[70] "how advantageous for the Christian to submit his intellect and his reason for the love of God! . . . Our Lord, Who was wisdom itself, did not follow His own judgment or will but submitted Himself to His Father. And you, to be true missionaries and true disciples of Jesus Christ, must submit your judgment to God, to our rules, . . . and, by condescension, to all men." He is just as clear and emphatic on another occasion.[71] "We must be very reserved," he said, "in never contradicting anyone for fear of causing confusion to our confrères, inciting quarrels or violating the truth. Let us guard against this, sirs. If we are of a contrary opinion to that which is proposed, let us either say nothing or simply say the things as we know them without blaming the views of others nor the manner in which they announce them." "Do not take it ill, sir," he wrote to one of his ablest men at Rome,[72] "if I tell you that I have always noticed in both of us the fault of following too easily our new imaginings and of being too much attached to them at times . . . In the name of God, sir, do nothing of importance and especially nothing

[67] *Ibid.*, 153, No. 641, To the Ladies of Charity, Feb. 11, 1649.
[68] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de P. (Suppl.)*, 202; *Ibid.*, 217.
[69] Abelly, iii., 322.
[70] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 428, No. 104.
[71] *Ibid.*, 477, No. 107.
[72] M. Codoing, *Lett.*, i., 428, No. 369, Nov. 21, 1642.

new without giving me your opinion beforehand in order that I might give you mine." "It is so far from being wrong to take advice," he writes to one of the superiors, "that we must do so when the affair is of any importance or when we of ourselves are unable to come to a decision. For temporal affairs one consults a lawyer or well-informed outside person; concerning affairs of the house one communicates with the consultors and with some others of the Company when one thinks fit."[73]

He instructed Mlle. le Gras to train the novices in the mortification of their judgments.[74] "Always take advice one from another," he tells the Daughters of Charity,[75] "and if you believe me in this matter, always submit rather to the opinion of your sister than follow your own." He took great pleasure in proposing for the imitation of the Sisters the example of a counselor who did nothing without asking the advice of his valet.[76]

Another determining factor in the prudent conduct of St. Vincent was experience. He brought his own past successes and failures as well as those of others to bear upon his decisions and actions. He established his first conference of Charity at Châtillon-les-Dombes on a provisional rule; and only after three months of experimenting did he give it permanent shape and seek ecclesiastical approbation [See p. 103]. He advised delay in drawing up the rules of another conference with the words, "Experience will, perhaps, prove the necessity of adding or toning down. Our Lord gave the law of grace to men without writing it; let us do the same here for some time."[77] It was only twenty years and more after the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity that he gave their rules their final form. In the meantime he submitted

[73] *Lett.*, ii., 250, No. 720, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, July 9, 1650; *cf.* also *Lett.*, iv., 30, No. 1607, To M. Durand, Supr. at Agde, Mar. 1, 1657; *Lett.*, i., 446, No. 383, To M. Guérin, Supr. at Annecy, Feb. 12, 1643; *Ibid.*, 521, No. 454, To M. Delattre, Supr. at Cahors, April 19, 1646.

[74] *Lett.*, i., 142, No. 141, To Mlle. le Gras.

[75] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de P. (Suppl.)*, 308, No. 3, June 19, 1647.

[76] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 461, No. 39, Aug. 7, 1650.

[77] *Lett.*, i., 104, No. 97, To Mlle. le Gras, 1635.

them to the rigid test of experience, modifying, adding, eliminating, as he saw advisable or necessary.

The lay administrators of the hospital for galley slaves at Marseilles were impatiently waiting for the rules of the institution to be drafted. St. Vincent wrote on this point to the priest in charge: "When they speak to you again concerning the rules of the hospital, tell them, if you please, that it is a good maxim of those whom God employs for new and holy undertakings, to defer as long as they can the regulations which they make, for experience shows that that which is possible in the beginning is often detrimental as things progress, or subject to exasperating inconveniences; that for this reason some communities, as the Carthusians, have waited a hundred years before drawing up their constitutions. St. Ignatius made only a scanty sketch of his, but the Society has since put them in their present shape according to the lights which time has discovered to them. Msgr. de Geneva [St. Francis de Sales], because too hasty in drafting the rules for the Daughters of Sainte-Marie, has been obliged to compile a directory."[78]

Experience, he tells us,[79] taught him the absolute necessity of the women of a conference not being dependent on the men especially as regards the money. He urged Mlle. le Gras to induce the members of one of the first conferences established to conform their regulations and practices to those organized later.[80] He learned from experience certain precautions to be taken when uniting other religious communities with his own.[81] He observed the advantages of having a parish church connected with the seminary for the complete training of the seminarians in practice as well as in theory.[82] He learned from the Carthusians the necessity and advantages of holding an annual visitation of his establishments.[83]

[78] *Lett.*, ii., 12, No. 532, To M. Portail, Priest of the Mission at Marseilles, Feb. 14, 1647.

[79] *Lett.*, i., 153, No. 151, To Mlle. le Gras, Oct. 31, 1636.

[80] *Ibid.*, 154, No. 152, To Mlle. le Gras.

[81] *Lett.*, iii., 468, No. 1391, To M. Levazeux, Supr. at Annecy, June 1, 1657.

[82] *Lett.*, iv., 143, No. 1695, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome, Sept. 6, 1658.

[83] *Lett.*, i., 317, No. 292, To M. du Coudray at Toul, June 17, 1640; *Ibid.*, 538, No. 466, To M. Bourdet, Supr. at Saint-Méen, July 23, 1646.

He did not hesitate to make experiments in new methods and unexplored fields if occasion demanded. In fact, nearly all his works began as experiments. Before formulating a definite plan for the care of the foundlings, he wished that some time be spent in testing various methods; and even for a number of years the work was undertaken only by way of trial. [See pp. 199-211.] In discussing the erection of the *Hôpital Général,* planned at that time, he wanted to take only one or two hundred poor who would apply voluntarily for admission until a trial had been made. [See pp. 271-2.] His attention was called to the fact that his young priests were not being assigned to missionary activities. He was willing to give them a trial and immediately made a number of appointments.[84] He was willing to test the expediency of admitting young boys into the seminary in preparation for the priesthood.[85] "If you think Henrietta knows how to teach school, very well. Give her a trial," are his instructions to Mlle. le Gras.[86]

To prudence St. Vincent united a deep and thorough knowledge of human nature and of the ways of the world. His own holiness and sanctity of life had not, as it were, transported him to another and superior world. He lived among men and he dealt with them, taking human nature as it is. Though a saint himself, he was not overexacting in expecting perfection of others. Not that he connived in any way at faults and shortcomings, but he was not surprised when he found them. "Is not the Kingdom of God on earth composed of the good and the bad?" he asked his brothers in religion.[87] "Does not a net take in all kinds of fishes?" Speaking at another time on the necessity of bearing with the faults and failings of others, he asked: "Where does one find men who are perfect and without fault and in regard to whom there is nothing to bear with? Can you find such a one for me?"[88] A superior once complained to

[84] *Lett.,* ii., 293, No. 756, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa, Dec. 2, 1650.
[85] *Lett.,* i., 603, No. 515, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Richelieu, Dec. 23, 1646; *Lett.,* iii., 249, No. 1207, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa, Mar. 3, 1656.
[86] *Lett.,* i., 183, No. 180, 1637.
[87] Abelly, ii., 360.
[88] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.,* 283, No. 86.

him of the faults of one of the brethren. "You must bear with him meekly," was Vincent's reply.[89] "If he had not these faults he would have others."

There were some who did not make the proper use of the spiritual retreats conducted at Saint-Lazare. Vincent expressed no surprise at this. On the contrary, his only comment was that "there is not a work of piety which some do not abuse, nothing so holy of which they do not make a bad use. But for this one ought not discontinue doing good, and we shall not be excusable before God if we become lax or cold in these exercises of charity because all those whom we assist do not derive all the fruit that we could desire."[90] Among the regulations for his army chaplains we find that "they will bear in mind that though they cannot remove all the sins of the army, God will perhaps give them the grace to diminish their number."[91]

We find innumerable instances of his practical psychology in his dealings with men. He did not unite the religious of Saint-Lazare with his own when he took up his residence there, knowing that the example of the former would cool the fervor and check the zeal of his newly organized community. He began the spiritual exercises for those about to receive ordinations and fostered the establishment of seminaries because convinced of the futility of trying to effect a far-reaching reform among the older clergy. Saying that newly appointed superiors are inclined to make changes to suit their own ideas, he exhorted one not to do it.[92] He urged that great caution be taken to avoid whatever might be interpreted as an encroachment on another's authority since all officials are jealous of their authority.[93] He saw the necessity of the vow of stability "to remedy the natural inconstancy of man and to prevent the dissolution of the Congregation." "Otherwise," he added, "many will enter it only to study and to render themselves capable of public functions, and then depart."[94]

[89] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 15, No. 2094.
[90] Abelly, ii., 361.
[91] Abelly, i., 231.
[92] *Lett.*, ii., 227, No. 700, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Richelieu, Feb. 23, 1650.
[93] *Ibid.*, 230, No. 703, To M. Lambert, Mar., 1650.
[94] *Ibid.*, 305, No. 765, To M. Alméras, Supr. at Rome, Jan. 3, 1651.

Warning his Daughters of Charity against becoming too attached to any one place or position, he described how such a Sister, for fear of being changed, would try to gain the favor of her companion by allowing her privileges and permitting laxities; the companion would then report that all was well in the house and thus the superioress would see no reason for a change.[95] He was told that two of his Daughters of Charity could not agree. He advises the practical solution of keeping them separated by giving them different employments.[96] He doubted the sincerity of a postulant, thinking he might have been induced to come to Paris out of consideration for his brother, or, perhaps attracted by the desire of seeing the sights of the city.[97] While acknowledging the utility of having a horse, he refused to allow the different houses to possess one on the plea that the brethren would go visiting too much and waste too much time in external affairs.[98] He cautioned his missionaries against acquiring a reputation. Among other things, he said the people hearing of their ability would form an exaggerated opinion of them in advance and would then be disappointed in them when they arrived, to the detriment of the mission they came to give.[99]

He knew man's natural love for change and novelty, and hence did not transfer the brethren from house to house except for substantial reasons. Some requested removal under the pretext of ill health asking for a change of climate and employment; some could not agree with their companions and hoped to succeed better elsewhere; some superiors were dissatisfied with their men and desired others in their places. St. Vincent was quick to distinguish between reason and pretext. He asked some to wait a while; others he encouraged to have patience; again he excused himself on account of the difficulty of filling their places and told them he would see in the course of

[95] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 641, No. 107, Dec. 14, 1659.

[96] *Lett.*, iv., 244, No. 1768, To M. Desdames, Supr. at Warsaw, Dec. 13, 1658.

[97] *Ibid.*, 119, To M. Laudin, Supr. at le Mans, Aug. 4, 1658.

[98] *Lett.*, iii., 206, No. 1168, To M. Cruoly, Supr. at le Mans, Oct. 29, 1655.

[99] *Ibid.*, 217, No. 1178, To M. Martin, Priest of the Mission at Turin, Dec. 10, 1655; *Ibid.*, 220, No. 1182, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa, Dec. 17, 1655.

time. He hoped, and not without reason, that, with the passing of time, the complainants would change their minds.[100]

St. Vincent gave further evidence of his prudence and knowledge of human nature as well as of his practical business mind in the making of contracts. He was very careful in exacting a deed of transfer whenever he acquired new property by donation or purchase. We read, for example, in one of his letters regarding the donation of the priory of Saint-Nicolas-de-Chanuan in the diocese of Poitiers to the Priests of the Mission: "It is necessary that you have a deposition of it made before a notary and a document to put in the hands of N. N., and a copy of the renunciation according to the agreement they have with the abbots and religious of Nôtre-Dame-des-Noyers, on whom said priory is dependent. . . . This resignation you will send in haste, if you please, to M. d'Horgny [the superior of the house at Rome] in order that on it and on the copy of the said agreement, which I must send to him, he will obtain the brief of the said union."[101] "You will send me the contract [of the purchase of a house] signed and sealed in good form," he wrote to one of the brethren.[102]

When he accepted complete or partial charge of an institution, he first entered upon an express agreement with the respective administrators or officials determining the exact scope of the offices and obligations of the position. Such an agreement he made, for example, with the administrators of the hospital at Marseilles when his priests were placed there.[103] When the administrators of this hospital demanded that the Company maintain two priests in the institution, St. Vincent wrote that he could not be obliged to do so since the letters of foundation did not determine it.[104] He reminded the chaplain of the Hôtel-Dieu at le Mans that he could not justly make demands on the Company

[100] Abelly, iii., 489; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 28c, No. 85, June 28, 1658.

[101] *Lett.*, i., 608, No. 518, To M. Blatiron at Genoa, Dec. 28, 1646. *Cf.* also *Lett.*, iii., 31, No. 1029, To M. Chiroye at Luçon, Mar. 8, 1654.

[102] *Lett.*, i., 293, No. 275, To M. le Breton at Rome, Feb. 26, 1640.

[103] *Lett.*, ii., 84, No. 592, To M. Portail at Marseilles, May 8, 1648.

[104] *Ibid.*, 12, No. 532, To M. Portail at Marseilles, Feb. 14, 1647.

which were not stipulated in the contract of foundation.[105]

To attain his purpose the more surely or without causing hard feelings, St. Vincent had recourse at times to what we might call diplomacy. He wrote on one occasion to a superior concerning some brethren who were insistent on asking certain permissions. He says: "Should anyone urge you too much . . . , request him to have patience and tell him that, not being able to grant the permission he asks, you will write to the general of the Congregation [i. e., to St. Vincent himself] about it, and in reality you will do so. And thus, while awaiting the answer, the time glides by and the temptation frequently vanishes. Thereupon I shall write to these persons and beg them to desist from their singularities and to adjust themselves to the common practices."[106] The superior of one of the houses had lost his first enthusiasm and had in consequence become somewhat careless on a number of points. St. Vincent asked him by letter[107] to give his advice on the manner of correcting a superior guilty of certain faults, mentioning the very faults of which the superior to whom he was writing had made himself guilty. A tax had been imposed on some of the chapels of the Congregation by the Bishop of le Mans. St. Vincent considered it excessive and unjust, but urged its payment until repealed by peaceful methods. He adds,[108] however: "Perhaps it will require but a good mission, with which the Bishop will be well pleased, to gain his good will towards you and, by his favor, to release you from the excessive tax." The superior at Sedan informed St. Vincent of a worthy cause there in need of financial aid. Vincent instructed him to write a letter and told him what circumstances and conditions to mention, in fact, almost dictating to him what he should say and how he should say it. This letter, then, St. Vincent was to read to the Ladies of Charity and solicit their aid.[109]

[105] *Ibid.*, 335, No. 792, May 7, 1651.

[106] *Lett.*, ii., 282, No. 746, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa, Oct. 14, 1650.

[107] *Ibid.*, 557, No. 969, July 19, 1653.

[108] *Ibid.*, 216, No. 692, To M. Gentil, Priest of the Mission at le Mans, Feb. 9, 1650.

[109] *Lett.*, iii., 194, No. 1156, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, Oct. 6, 1655. *Cf.* also *Ibid.*, 588, No. 1486, To Jean Parre, Bro. of the Mission at Saint-Quentin, Sept. 22, 1657.

We must not infer from this, however, that Vincent de Paul was insincere in character or intriguing in his dealings with men. On the contrary, simplicity, according to his own humble confession,[110] was his favorite virtue; its practice he calls his Gospel.[111] It struck his contemporaries with admiration and won for him the confidence and affection of all with whom he came in contact, thus contributing in no small measure to the success of his immense undertakings. It was all the more admirable and wonderful since he fostered and practised it in his relations with a corrupt and intriguing world and amid the hypocrisy, deception, and duplicity of the royal court. The multitude and diversity of his affairs caused him at times to forget little things, such as to answer a letter promptly, to keep an engagement, and the like. His sincerity prompted him frankly to acknowledge his forgetfulness rather than shield himself with some excuse or artifice. The obtaining of the papal approbation for his Congregation was certainly one of the great desires of his heart. Yet he would have sacrificed it rather than obtain it by intrigue.[112] A bishop wanted a priest of the Congregation for one of his parishes. For some reason the request could not be granted. It was suggested to St. Vincent, however, that a certain secular priest be allowed to pass as one of the Company and take possession of the parish. Vincent absolutely refused and characterized such a deed as "a grave fault contrary to the simplicity we profess and a disguisement very foreign to the usage of the first Christians of whom Pliny the Younger relates that they were accustomed to do nothing by stealth nor to equivocate."[113]

He practiced simplicity with all the fervor of his soul and rigorously stigmatized the contrary vice. "To appear good externally," he once said, "and to be far otherwise internally is to act as did the hypocritical Pharisees. It is to imitate the devil, who transforms himself into an angel of light." It was one of his maxims that "as prudence of the

[110] *Lett.*, i., 93, No. 85, To M. Coudray at Rome, Nov. 6, 1634.
[111] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 534, No. 45, Feb. 24, 1653.
[112] *Lett.*, ii., 430, No. 872, June, 1652; *Ibid.*, 435, No. 877, To M. d'Horgny, Supr. at Rome, June 13, 1648.
[113] *Lett.*, iii., 209, No. 1172, To M. Chiroye, Supr. at Luçon, Nov. 14, 1655.

flesh and hypocrisy especially reign in this corrupt age to the great detriment of the spirit of Christianity, we cannot better combat and overcome them than by a true and sincere simplicity."[114] The Daughters of Charity he urged[115] to imitate the simple candor of the girls of the villages, "who use neither artifice nor double-meaning words," but are truthful and honest in word and deed.

But it was, above all, in preaching the word of God that St. Vincent demanded the utmost simplicity. He inaugurated and fostered by word and example the movement that threw aside the florid, bombastic style of the Renaissance and returned to the simple, intelligible, unadulterated exposition of Catholic doctrine.

His work brought him in contact with all classes of society, the highest as well as the lowest. But he was ever simple, humble, unassuming in language, dress and deportment, spurning proffered dignities and honors for himself and his community, indifferent to success and deaf to popular applause. "Monsieur Vincent was," as a virtuous ecclesiastic once characterized him, "always Monsieur Vincent."[116]

We have already had occasion several times to hint at St. Vincent's characteristic slowness. We have remarked his reluctance to enter upon new enterprises; his policy of waiting, observing, experimenting in drafting his different rules and constitutions; his indecision until he had acquainted himself with all the circumstances and until he had weighed, as he used to say, "the nature, the means, and the end," in all things. This trait sprang from his humility and diffidence, from his fear of anticipating or even frustrating the plans of divine providence and also from experience which had proven to him its expediency.

His confrères, especially the younger, grew impatient at times with this procrastinating policy and voiced their complaints to their holy founder. Let us hear his own admirable justification culled from one of his letters.[117]

[114] Abelly, iii., 332.
[115] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 77, No. 10, Jan. 25, 1643.
[116] Abelly, iii., 423.
[117] M. Codoing, Supr. at Annecy, *Lett.*, i., 381, No. 338, Dec. 7, 1641.

"You will object," he writes, "that I am too slow, that you wait sometimes six months for an answer that could be given in one, and that in the meantime the opportunities are lost and everything is at a standstill. I answer to this, sir, that it is true I am too slow in answering and in doing things, but nevertheless, I have never yet seen an affair hurt by my delay. On the contrary everything has been done in its good time with the necessary foresight and precautions. Still I resolve, for the future, to give you an answer as soon as possible after receiving your letters and considering the matter before God, Who is greatly honored by the time we consume in considering maturely the things that concern His service. . . . You will, then, correct yourself, if you please, of the hastiness in resolving and acting, and I shall strive to correct my remissness." "Reviewing all the principal things that have been done in this Company," he continues in the same letter, "it seems to me (and it is easily demonstrated) that, had they been done before they were, they would not have been done so well. I say this without excepting a single one. This is why I have a special devotion to follow, step by step, the adorable providence of God; and the sole consolation I have is that it seems to me it is our Lord alone Who has done, and continues to do, the things of this little Company."

In another letter to the same superior,[118] we again find him counseling protracted consideration before acting. "And I beseech you," he adds, "in the name of our Lord to have confidence that the things of God ordinarily ought not to perish for taking more time in considering them and for recommending them to Him. Quite the contrary, everything does not but go the better because of it." He checked the ardor of the Ladies of Charity who wished to rush the founding of the *Hôpital Général,* with the striking but truly characteristic words: "When God wished to save Noe and his family from the deluge, He commanded him to build an ark, which could have been completed within a short time; and still He had him begin a hundred years before in order that he might build it little by little. In like manner, God

[118] *Ibid.,* 391, No. 345. Jan. 31, 1642.

wishing to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land could have had them make the journey in a few days; and, nevertheless, more than forty years passed before He gave them the grace to enter." He adduces several other similar examples "teaching us not to advance too much in the things that depend more on God than on us." "What, then, must we do?" he concludes: "We must proceed gently, pray much to God and act in concert."[119]

We may cite one further typical example from among the many on hand. St. Vincent was once approached to use his influence in favor of a young lawyer who wished to be employed in the management of the affairs of a noble family. He replied: "We shall think it over, but before doing anything we shall observe silence on this matter for a whole month to listen to God and to honor the silence which our Lord so often observed on earth." After deferring the affair for four or five months he saw to it that the young man procured his position.[120] "I see nothing more common," he once wrote to Mlle. le Gras,[121] "than the failure of things hastily undertaken."

As fairly illustrative of his fear of anticipating the plans of God, we may quote from one of his letters to a person of piety.[122] "How greatly do those honor our Lord who follow it [His providence] and do not encroach upon it! I heard it said recently about one of the great ones of the realm that he had learned this truth from his own experience, for he had never undertaken but four things on his own initiative; and these, instead of succeeding for him, were turned to his own ruin. Is it not true that you do not wish, as is very reasonable, your servant to undertake anything without you and your order? And if this is reasonable among men, how much more so between the Creator and the creature?"

While we note several avowals[123] on the part of St. Vincent of having acted too hastily in spite of his customary

[119] Abelly, i., 312-3.
[120] Abelly, iii., 345.
[121] *Lett.*, i., 168, No. 165, an. 1637.
[122] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 20, No. 3001, an. 1637.
[123] *V.g.*, *Lett.*, iv., 367, No. 1859, To M. Get, Supr. at Montpellier, June 13, 1659; *Ibid.*, 384, No. 1871, To M. Get, June 27, 1659.

care, there are no instances on record of his having ever regretted his policy of waiting. He adhered to it consistently from the beginning of his career of charity to the end of his life.

But once assured of the Will of God, of the righteousness and feasibility of a course of action, he no longer wavered, but set to work with an intrepidity, tenacity and clearness of purpose that no difficulty, no obstacle could weaken. He applied himself with a sagacious and orderly prudence; he sustained the burdens, the troubles, the delays with a courage, constancy, and perseverance born of his unbounded trust in God and of the consequent assurance of God's blessing, the coöperation of well-meaning men, and ultimate success.

He gives us a clear expression of his own mind in this regard in one of his letters.[124] "It is the maxim of the Saints," he writes, "that when a thing has been decided before God after many prayers and consultations, we must reject and consider as temptations whatever is proposed to the contrary." After obtaining ecclesiastical approbation for his Congregation and experiencing the singular blessings of God and the favor of men in its behalf, he was urged by an ecclesiastic to divert its primary purpose of holding missions to the care and direction of seminaries. Apropos to this proposal he writes in the same letter: "It seems to me it would almost require an angel from heaven to persuade us it is the will of God that we abandon this work to undertake another which has already been tried and has not succeeded in many districts." "The difficulties which are raised among us concerning the vows," he said in a general assembly,[125] "will cease with time because we have taken this resolution with counsel and after long deliberations."

We have seen that St. Vincent was very deliberate in his actions and opposed to thoughtless precipitation. We must not, however, mistake this quality for inertness or sluggishness. Nothing would be further from the truth. Vincent de Paul was possessed with a passion for work and

[124] *Lett.*, i., 396, No. 347, To M. Codoing at Annecy, Feb. 9, 1642.

[125] Minutes of July 1, 1651, *Lett. et Conférences de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 263; *cf.* also Abelly, iii., 458.

was a miser of time. "Life is too short as it is," he writes to one of the brethren,[126] and admonishes him not to steal from the little time we have by oversleeping in the mornings. He himself would remain at his work until a late hour of the night and still always rise at four o'clock. He once complained to Mlle. le Gras[127] of the lack of time and wished that God could grant him more. In writing to a confrère at Annecy,[128] he urged him to continue "to work in earnest, *tempus enim breve est et grandis nobis restat via*" [for time is short and a great part of the way still lies before us]. In another letter to one of his brethren he complained of time lost in deciphering his badly written communications and admonished him to improve his handwriting.[129]

One of the greatest marvels of his wonderful life was the manner in which he regulated and occupied his time. He never gave a moment to idleness. He never paid visits but when the necessity of business or the obligations of gratitude or charity demanded it. He filled the office of superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity until his death. He had the direction of several other religious communities and of many charitable organizations. He had a wide correspondence and received callers daily who sought his advice and direction. It was with all this in mind that Mlle. de Lamoignon remarked one day that St. Vincent had done more good works than any twenty other Saints.

As we have already seen St. Vincent de Paul was well fitted for his work by grace and by nature. His own experiences, too, stood him in good stead. He had lived through the poverty and religious indifference of the people of the country districts during his youth. He had come in direct contact with the sufferings and misery and moral dangers of a Christian slave in the Barbary States during his own period of captivity. He had gained some knowledge of medicine, when a captive, from his second master, an alchemist, and had an opportunity of acquainting himself with the

[126] *Lett.*, ii., 208, No. 688, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Richelieu, Jan. 15, 1650.
[127] *Lett.*, i., 160, No. 158, an. 1637.
[128] *Ibid.*, 325, No. 298, To M. Escart, July 25, 1640.
[129] *Lett.*, ii., 490, No. 913, To M. Lambert in Poland, Oct. 10, 1652.

current methods of nursing while serving the patients of the Hospital of Charity after his return from Rome. The assistance he solicited and obtained from persons in Paris for the erection of his little parish church at Clichy, assured him of the good results that could be expected by appealing to outside help. The success of his first conference of charity, established while pastor of Châtillon-les-Dombes in 1617, had revealed to him the possibilities of organized, concerted action in the field of active charities. His position as almoner to Queen Marguerite and as tutor in the house of Gondi had given him moral prestige and gained for him the acquaintance and sympathy of persons whose aid was invaluable to him in later years. His two years' sojourn with the Fathers of the Oratory had brought him in touch with the religious movement for Catholic reform that was inaugurated at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Wherein lay the secret of St. Vincent's power and influence over the hearts and minds of men? Certainly not in his prepossessing exterior. It was his earnestness, his meekness and humility, but above all his utter disinterestedness and universal charity. The circumstances of the times, too, undoubtedly reënforced his appeal. The richer classes, money-loving and pleasure-seeking though they were, could not but be affected with pity and inspired with a latent desire to help at the sight of so much misery and distress. They only awaited the advent of one to make a direct appeal to them and to assure them that their charity would not be abused but would be turned to the best advantage. And this man was St. Vincent de Paul.

SECTION I

The General Sociological and Politico-Economic Ideas of Saint Vincent de Paul

The providence of God and the force of circumstances, rather than studied forethought and premeditated choice, led St. Vincent de Paul to consecrate his life to the service of his fellowmen. These same factors directed his course into the many phases of his activity which, taken collectively, resulted in a constructive social programme of an extent, thoroughness, and practicality St. Vincent had never dreamt of inaugurating. He entered the field of social activities without preconceived ideas. He had no scholarly knowledge of the complex structure of human society, of social forces and social processes; no subtle social philosophy, no great social vision, no elaborate plans or theories of social relief and social reform.

He was preëminently a man of action and of practical results. He saw the concrete problem before him; he calculated the possibilities of the relief resources at his command and applied them to the individual case guided only by the dictates of his sober, practical mind.

We seek, therefore, in vain among his writings for erudite treatises and discussions on the problems of the day and their possible solutions, and are compelled to glean his ideas on the different questions from his mode of action, his various constitutions, and from incidental remarks found in his correspondence and his spiritual conferences.

CHAPTER I

Conservatism

Since St. Vincent had no definite, technical plan of relief and reform which he wished to fit into the social structure, we are not so much surprised at the extremely conservative ideas that he manifested throughout his career. As far as is known, he never even thought of submitting the existing institutions, whether political, economic, social, or charitable, to a philosophical scrutiny, of comparing their justice, their utility, or their propriety to different, and possibly more equitable, arrangements.

He accommodated himself, therefore, to the institutions as he found them. He accepted them as a matter of course. He beheld their weaknesses, their failures, and their abuses, it is true; but, instead of advocating fundamental or revolutionary innovations, he endeavored merely to reënforce their weak points, to supplement their shortcomings, and to correct their abuses.

We have unmistakable testimony of his conservatism in his own words. Mlle. le Gras had asked him concerning some changes of detail in a certain hospital. "That which is good," he answered, "one must not change; as for me, I have as my maxim wherever I go to change nothing in order to accommodate it to my way except what is bad; I prefer to accommodate myself to it, for I think, 'Who am I that I would order and change things? Those who have done them, have had reasons for doing them thus and have taken counsel, and shall I of my own accord overturn it all? I would rather accommodate myself to it.' I tell you also, my daughter, that which you will find bad or prejudicial to the glory of God or to the salvation of fellowman, oh! try in a gentle way to remedy it; but what is not bad, one must leave as long as possible."[1] When we bear in mind that St. Vincent enun-

[1] *Lett. et Confér de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 306, No. 3, June 19, 1647.

ciated this maxim after nearly forty years' experience in public works of charity, we can assure ourselves that he is but summarizing his past policy and giving expression to his settled conviction.

In one of his letters[2] he advised a confrère not to be overzealous in correcting abuses. "He who wishes to cure the evils of the body and restore better health," he writes, "must give the remedies little by little; otherwise it is to be feared that he will cause more harm than good. It suffices in a visit [canonical visitation] that one learns the evil, proposes and orders the remedies and leaves the execution to the superior." This advice is especially significant in view of the fact that the point at issue concerned his own Congregation where he enjoyed complete jurisdiction. For the correction of abuses among the Christian captives of Algiers he urged the utmost discretion and moderation. "Especially one must not undertake to abolish so soon," he wrote, "the things that are in vogue among them [i. e., the captives] though they be bad. Someone told me the other day a beautiful passage of St. Augustine, who says that one should be cautious to attack at first sight a vice that is prevalent in the place, because one will not only not succeed, but, on the contrary, one will offend the minds in which this custom is, as it were, inveterate, so that one will no longer be in a position to accomplish in them the further good which one would have been able to do by approaching them in another way."—"I do not say," he continues, "that one must authorize or permit their disorders; but I do say that the remedies ought to be gentle and benign in their [the captives'] present condition and applied with great precaution, because of the place and the prejudice which they could cause you if you displease them, and not only you, but also the consul and the work of God. . . ."[3]

The brethren at Montmirail had apparently desired and, perhaps, attempted, to introduce the daily exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the octave of Corpus Christi. St. Vincent wrote to them: "The exposition of the Blessed Sacrament during the octaves is not everywhere in vogue.

[2] *Lett.*, i., 597, No. 509, To M. Portail, Confrère at La Rose, Nov. 24, 1646.
[3] *Lett.*, ii., 297, No. 759, To M. Philippe Levacher in Algiers, Dec., 1650.

One must do at Rome as the Romans do and submit to the customs of the place if they are not wrong."[4] To some Sisters who were to engage in war nursing at Calais, he gave the advice on the eve of their departure: "When you see that those who nurse the sick do not go about the work in the proper way, say nothing except to our Sisters."[5] They were, therefore, not to proceed rashly in reforming the methods of others.

The privilege of the king to confer certain ecclesiastical offices had become directly responsible for many of the disorders of the Church of France. And St. Vincent, on his part, was very intent on restoring ecclesiastical discipline. Still, in spite of his intimacy and influence at the royal court, he did not endeavor to have the king cede his privilege but devoted his efforts to the correction of its abuse by having only worthy candidates appointed to office. He beheld, too, the flagrant abuses to which the right of appeal from an ecclesiastical to a secular court [*appel comme d'abus*] was put. But here again he advocated, not the abolition of the right, but merely the correction of its abuses by urging the ecclesiastical jurists to fill their positions so faultlessly and efficiently as to preclude all reason of appeal.

The disorders existing in the Hôtel-Dieu of Paris were brought to his notice, and he was called upon to reform them. He did so merely by having his Ladies of Charity supplement the efforts of those in charge. And on a larger scale, the service and accommodations of the hospitals had become inadequate to the increased numbers and needs of the sick poor. Vincent, however, did not think of analyzing the situation methodically and of reorganizing hospital work on a new and broader basis to meet these new demands. He contented himself with correcting abuses when occasion offered, and established his conferences of charity which served as supplementary agencies. We must remark, however, that although St. Vincent was conscious of this result as the work developed, it cannot be said that he had it definitely in mind when founding his first confraternity, nor do we detect

[4] *Lett.*, i., 213, No. 206, To M. Bécu, June 17, 1638.

[5] *Conférences de S. Vincent de Paul aux Filles de la Charité*, Paris, 1881, vol. ii., 520, No. 93, Aug. 4, 1658.

evidences of systematized coöperation between the two organizations at any time.

Neither by word nor action did St. Vincent manifest disapproval of the long established social divisions. Neither did he expressly approve them. He merely accepted the arrangement as a matter of course. And we find him at all times showing the customary respect and deference for the nobility.

We find a very striking exemplification of this at the time of the devastation of Lorraine. A number of the nobility had taken refuge in Paris and were in great need. Though St. Vincent was ever insistent on the obligation of earning one's livelihood [cf. pp. 157-8], still, remembering that the nobility were conventionally exempted from manual labor, he respected this exemption and organized a special band of pious nobles to provide them with the necessaries of life [cf. pp. 258-60.]

He was, however, opposed in principle to the ambition of passing from one social status to a higher by the ladder of accumulated wealth. He preached contentment with one's social status. There each one was to seek his livelihood and his happiness, detached from an inordinate desire of worldly possession and serving God in peace and resignation [cf. pp. 155-7]. He did not wish to have the nobility enter either his Congregation of Mission Priests or his Daughters of Charity. This stand, however, as he himself says, was prompted, not by an odious discrimination against the nobles as a class, but by motives of humility—his Mission Priests and his Daughters of Charity were humble, unpretentious organizations recruiting their ranks from among the poor for work among the poor. Still Vincent's practical mind must have been influenced at the same time by the consideration that these were also better fitted by associations of early life and general temperament for this task of sacrificing love.

Social classes, however, did not mean social isolation to the mind of St. Vincent. He himself disregarded social lines entirely in his administrations of charity. He assisted alike the noble and the peasant. Need, and not rank, was his criterion of action. He organized a special band of

nobles as we have just seen, to come to the aid of the impoverished noble refugees of Lorraine, while he had the children of the nobility brought to Paris where he himself procured for them help and protection. [Cf. pp. 252-3.] The whole complex of his mission of charity tended, as a natural result, to bring the classes into closer and more sympathetic union, though leaving unimpaired the demarcations of social status. He unrolled before the eyes of the rich and socially prominent the needs and miseries of those less favored with the goods of this world and urged upon them the obligations of Christian charity. That they responded generously to his appeal is amply evidenced by the results. The recipients of this charity, on their part, could not but regard their benefactors with affectionate gratitude.

The system of property holding, too, in all its phases, as it existed in France during the seventeenth century, received at least the implicit endorsement of St. Vincent. There is no word or action of his on record that could be interpreted as condemning the prevailing system or as advocating any reform in principle. He refers to the common ownership of property practiced by the first Christians only when addressing his Daughters of Charity and in explaining their rule and their vow of poverty.[6] By taking possession of the priory of Saint-Lazare, Jan. 8, 1632, he became the lord of a vast ecclesiastical seigniory with all its privileges and offices of justice. He had the right to judge and punish crimes committed on the estate and to distribute all the offices. The peasants dwelling on the property and tilling the land paid their annual rent. He inquired concerning the producing value of farms, he bought and traded them, and took and paid rent for them in connection with the establishments of his Congregation throughout France.[7]

He expressed his views on the right of private ownership and its inviolability very clearly in one of his conferences to the Daughters of Charity. He was explaining the article of their rule which forbids a Sister to take what has

[6] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 173, No. 67, Aug. 20, 1656.

[7] *Cf., v.g., Lett.*, ii., 451, No. 887, To M. Gicquel at le Mans, July 24, 1652; *Lett.*, iv., 328, 329, No. 1831, To M. Monvoisin at Montmirail, May 5, 1659; *Ibid.*, 506, No. 1980, Dec. 16, 1659.

been assigned to the use of another. As a motive for its observance, he said that "by failing in this respect one acts against the natural law which forbids one to make use of the things of another against the latter's will. This is the first law that God has planted in the heart of man . . . that one does not do to another what one does not wish to have done to oneself." A little later in the same conference he said: "In the world [in contrast to religious life], to retain against the will of another that which belongs to him is called theft."[8]

In accordance with this conviction he was very prompt in paying his debts. If he owed money, he would not wait for the creditor to call for it, but had it sent to him. He said that it was not just to put one to the inconvenience of calling in order to get what was legitimately his own. He was also very conscientious in indemnifying those who had suffered any damage on his account, no matter how involuntarily it had happened. One day his coachman accidentally upset some loaves of bread in front of a baker-shop. He immediately paid for them and had them sent to Saint-Lazare. The same coachman on another occasion broke an old and well-worn bar that served to close a carriage entrance. St. Vincent had it replaced with a new one three or four times its value. The sole laxity that can be detected in St. Vincent's views on property rights is his refusal to urge his own debts and prosecute his own just claims. [Cf. pp. 67-9.]

We may adduce still another example of St. Vincent's conservatism in economic questions, viz., the question of taking interest. In all his works we find but one clear reference to the question.[9] He had been asked by one of the brethren if a guardian were allowed to put ten thousand crowns of his ward's money on interest in view of the fact that the court would condemn him to pay interest to this *protegé*. St. Vincent did not give a direct answer. He did not even venture an opinion of his own, but merely advanced the opin-

[8] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 255, 257, No. 75, Aug. 5, 1657.

[9] In *Lett.*, iv., 243, No. 1768, Dec. 13, 1658, he authorized M. Desdames, the addressee, to borrow a thousand crowns and instructs him to return it later in small payments, but he makes no mention of interest.

ions of others, from which, however, it is evident that he, in agreement with the moralists of his day, did not admit the lawfulness of direct interest taking. He wrote: "The Sorbonne finds itself hindered from solving this difficulty seeing, on the one hand, that the best casuists condemn this usury and, on the other, that the sovereign courts authorize it, especially with regard to wards. Still these doctors [of the Sorbonne] are of the common opinion that guardians, as well as others, cannot and ought not collect these interests, but should find some way of escaping that the courts oblige them to pay interest to their wards, for example, by calling their parents, in order, with their consent, to command that the money which they hold be put in real estate or *en rentes constituées*. This is what you can advise to him of whom you speak; and, if he has already given it on interest, it is proper that he demand his debtors to return the principal when the time expires; and, should they fail to do so, that he obtain sentence against them for the payment of the said interest, because then it will be more allowed for him to receive it."[10]

[10] *Lett.*, iii., 443, No. 1365, To M. Serre at Saint-Méen, April 4, 1657.

CHAPTER II

The Power and Duties of the State

As far as we are able to divine them, the ideas of Vincent de Paul on the nature of the state, the origin of its powers, and its responsibilities did not differ from the prevalent Catholic concept and from the current political philosophy of France.

To his mind, the civil authority was the delegated power of God. Obedience to the king and to his representatives was obedience to God. We can easily explain, therefore, his own reverence for, and submission to, authority, as also his reason for inculcating these same virtues in others whenever occasion offered. "We must never say or do anything contrary to the laws and imposts of the princes," he writes to the superior at Turin,[1] "for they believe, and with reason, that their power is of divine right." He cites then the miracle that Christ performed in order to "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and concludes with the earnest request: "I beg you to make this truth well known to all your colaborers, in order that they fail in no regard against the sovereign orders." In a conference to the Daughters of Charity and again in one to his confrères he places obedience "to the princes and kings of earth" on a par with the obedience due ecclesiastical authority and says the commandments of God oblige to the one as well as to the other.[2] On one occasion he had intended to visit certain of his establishments, but the queen commanded him to return to Paris. In his perplexity he wrote thus to one of his brethren: "I do not see how I can do the will of God in not obeying [the queen], I who have always believed and taught that one

[1] *Lett.*, iii., 309, No. 1256, July 14, 1656.

[2] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 234, No. 13, Sept. 29, 1655; *Avis et Confér. Spirituelles de S. Vinc. de Paul*, Paris, 1881, 174, No. 56, Oct. 15, 1655. *Cf.* also *Confér. aux Filles de Char.*, i., 65, No. 9, June 20, 1642.

must obey the princes, even the bad ones, as Holy Scripture says."[3]

To what extent he was ready to carry his obedience, he manifested when he said: "My brethren, following their [the early Christians'] example, we ought to render faithful and simple obedience to the kings without ever complaining against them or murmuring for any reason whatever. And though it will be a question of losing our possessions and our lives, let us give them in this spirit of obedience rather than act contrary to their wishes when the will of God does not intervene; for the kings represent to us on earth the sovereign power of God."[4]

After the magistrates of Paris had determined in 1656 to open the *Hôpital Général* [p. 272] public begging and public almsgiving were forbidden by law in Paris. St. Vincent, in obedience to the law, discontinued his distribution of alms at Saint-Lazare. The poor complained to him, saying: "Mon Père, has not God commanded to give alms to the poor?" His charitable heart must have been deeply touched, but he answered: "It is true, my friends, but He has also commanded obedience to magistrates."[5] Still during a severe winter which reduced many families to extreme misery, he continued his daily distribution of bread and soup. We do not know, however, that this was not done with the consent of the civil authorities.

If St. Vincent believed in, and taught, the sancity of civil laws and of the royal power from which they emanated, he was also clear in declaring the dependence of the king on the supreme Lawgiver. Referring to the civil dissensions at the time of the Fronde, he wrote thus to one of his superiors: "God sometimes permits these great agitations, which shake the strongest states, in order to remind the sovereigns of the earth that they depend on His royal power and that they are not more independent than are their own subjects."[6]

Obedience and submission to civil authority did not

[3] *Lett.*, ii., 161, No. 647, To M. Portail, Missionary at Marseilles, May 21, 1649.

[4] Abelly, iii., 319.

[5] *Ibid.*, iii., 187-8.

[6] *Lett.*, iii., 346-7, No. 1288, To M. Ozenne, Supr. in Silesia, Sept. 18, 1656.

mean, however, that St. Vincent always saw with the eyes of the government, agreed blindly with all its policies, and endorsed all its acts. He could not approve of Richelieu's policy of breaking the power of Catholic Austria by allying the forces of Catholic France with the Protestant princes of Germany, nor of his endeavor to acquire national prestige at the cost of individual welfare and prosperity. He protested to the president of the parliament of Rennes against the unjust imprisonment of one of the brethren and demanded his release.[7] He protested against a new tax imposed by the city of Angers and prejudicial to certain interests of his Congregation.[8] He protested likewise against the queen's rigor during the Fronde, as we shall see immediately.

In stressing submission to lawful authority, St. Vincent was influenced also by social considerations. He recognized that disregard for law and order was the basic and fertile source of armed rebellion and civil strife, while these, in turn, were directly responsible for much of the moral and material misery of the realm, especially at the middle of the seventeenth century. Hence, by urging respect for authority, he was at the same time striking at the root of a social evil.

The first to whom he turned during this turbulent period were the bishops. He urged and encouraged them to remain in their dioceses, that by their presence and their authority they might hold the people faithful to their allegiance and suppress the designs of the rebellious. He wrote a number of letters to this effect to several of the prelates. Some he congratulated for having kept the cities of their diocese loyal to the cause of the king. Others he dissuaded from coming to the capital to present their complaints against the marauding soldiers; it would be useless at this inopportune time. They should rather remain at their posts, consoling and encouraging their flocks and rendering what services they could to the king, who would one day indemnify them.[9]

[7] *Lett.*, i., 569, No. 487, To M. de Marbeuf, Sept. 8, 1646.
[8] *Ibid.*, 533, No. 462, July 8, 1646.
[9] *Lett.*, ii., 401, No. 852, To Nicolas Sevin, Archbp. of Sarlat, Mar. 23, 1652; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 105, No. 3082, an. 1654.

The service of the king and the welfare of France and its people impelled him to go further. He addressed a letter of some length to the Holy Father, Innocent X, in which he exposed the miseries of France and begged him as "Pastor of the Universal Church" to use his influence in bringing about peace.[10] He also acted as mediator between the throne and the rebellious princes.

But his courage, disinterestedness, loyalty to king and conscience, and desire for peace were very strikingly brought out during these same troubles by another event. The barricades of Paris thrown up by the rebels, the violent liberation of those who had been arrested by order of the court, and the factions which daily increased, induced the queen to deviate from her usual mildness and to adopt rigid measures. She resolved to starve the city into submission. Accordingly, she left Paris with the young king and the greater part of her court and took up her temporary residence at Saint Germain-en-Laye. This course appeared too rigorous, if not unjust, to St. Vincent. He was terrified at the thought of the misery and suffering that would inevitably ensue. He determined, therefore, to have an interview with the queen.

He was well aware that such a step, in the present agitated state of the public mind, might mean disgrace or exile for him; but he feared neither when confronted with the alternative of seeing God outraged and the people reduced to extreme misery. He left Paris without acquainting anyone with his design, in order to be able to assure the queen that he was acting purely on his own initiative. After a circuitous route fraught with grave dangers to his personal safety, he arrived at Saint Germain. In a long interview with the queen, he advanced every argument he could muster to incline her to clemency. He presented to her the injustice of occasioning the starvation of thousands in order to punish a few. Finally, he even presumed to advise at least the temporary dismissal of Cardinal Mazarin, her prime minister, who, because of his Italian birth and his selfish ambitions, was the center of the rebellion. Going

[10] *Ibid.*, 464, No. 899, To Pope Innocent X, Aug. 16, 1652.

from the apartment of the queen to that of her minister, he repeated all he had said to the queen, not omitting the Cardinal's retirement from power. Mazarin, won by Vincent's disinterestedness and sincerity, did not take this boldness ill, but answered kindly, though, perhaps, diplomatically: "Well, my Father, I will go, if M. de Tellier is of your opinion." That same day, the queen held a council to discuss the propositions of Vincent. M. de Tellier opposed them, as Mazarin probably knew he would, through reasons of state, and it was determined that the Cardinal remain.

St. Vincent later wrote a letter to Mazarin in which he fearlessly told him of the impossibility of gaining the good will of the people by being exclusive, that he must necessarily grant representations of the nobles, free access to the king, and have the king and queen mother return to Paris.[11] Peace was finally established, due in no small degree to the efforts of St. Vincent.

St. Vincent de Paul was, then, a lover and promoter of peace. Still he did not reject war as intrinsically wrong. On the contrary, he recognized its legitimacy when waged in defence of the just interests of the State or the Church. He informed M. Lambert, the superior at Richelieu, by letter of the prospective coming of the king to that town and instructed him as to how he should pay his respects. "Tell him," he wrote, "that you have come to present to his Majesty the services of the Company and to assure him of its prayers that it may please God to bless his person and his arms and to preserve him always that He may grant him the grace to subdue the rebels and to extend his empire to the ends of the earth in order to make God reign in his states."[12]

These good wishes, prompted, in part, more by love and devotion to king and country than by the hope of their realization, prove, nevertheless, that Vincent considered just and holy the right of royalty to suppress rebellion by the force of arms.

Among the regulations drawn up to meet the special needs of his army chaplains, we read: "The priests of the Mission who are with the army will bear in mind that our

[11] *Ibid.*, 475, No. 906, Sept. 11, 1652.
[12] *Ibid.*, 254, No. 724, July 17, 1650.

Lord has called them to this holy occupation, to offer their prayers and their sacrifices to God for the happy success of the good designs of the king and for the preservation of his army. They will have a special devotion to the name God assumes in the Scriptures, 'the God of Armies,' and to the sentiment our Lord had when He said, *'non veni pacem mittere sed gladium'* [I came not to send peace, but the sword. Mt. 10, 34.] : and this that He may give us peace which is the aim of war."[13] These regulations were given in 1636 at the beginning of the French period of the Thirty Years' War. At the same time Saint-Lazare was serving as an emergency recruiting station and barracks for the army mustered to meet the invasion of the Spaniards.[14]

These circumstances are especially significant in view of St. Vincent's expressed opposition to Richelieu's policy which forced France to take up arms against Catholic Austria. They seem to indicate Vincent's willingness to co-operate whole-heartedly in executing the king's wishes and commands while not approving of the policies that prompted them, even while urging the king to change these policies. Or, to express it more concretely, the official declaration of war was sufficient to enlist his patriotic sympathy and aid in the cause of the king. The consideration of the policy that led to war does not seem to have cooled the ardor of his service.

In a letter to M. Get, the superior at Marseille, we read: "I am consoled to hear of the expedition of the English against those of Tunis and desire that France do the same."[15] "Oh! that we earnestly pray to God," he wrote again, "that He bless the designs of the Republic of Genoa if it is true that it has taken up arms against these miscreant towns [of the Barbary States] that do so much evil to all Christianity and whose inhabitants, slaves of the demon, wish to ruin the souls of as many Christians as they hold under their tyranny."[16] In still another letter he wrote on the same point: "I render thanks to God for the proposition which M. le Chevalier Paul

[13] Abelly, i., 231.
[14] *Lett.*, i., 136, No. 133. To M. Portail, Aug. 15, 1636.
[15] *Lett.*, iii., 169, No. 1126, June 4, 1655.
[16] *Ibid.*, 336, No. 1278, To M. Get, Sept. 1, 1656.

has made of going to Algiers to exact justice of the Turks. I beg you to see him for me and to congratulate him on this design."[17] In these citations Vincent unmistakably admits the justice of war to break the power of the enemies of Christianity.

He elsewhere acknowledges the legitimacy of one nation going to the assistance of another in repelling an unjust aggressor. He urged Richelieu, though in vain, to send the forces of France to aid Ireland against England instead of using them against Austria and assured the prime minister that the Pope would second his efforts and give a hundred thousand crowns toward financing the undertaking.[18]

The state, according to St. Vincent, was bound on its part to protect the rights of the individual citizen. He wrote thus to M. Delvères, minister of justice in Touraine:[19] "The jurisdiction which the king has given you by the oracle of divine providence to uphold his [authority] among his subjects and to conserve the public rights and *guarantee those of the individuals*, occasions us to have recourse to you, sir, in the present circumstances."[20]

During the Fronde he appealed to the queen mother by letter, begging her to protect the farmers against the marauding soldiers that they might harvest their crops unmolested.[21] Two of his letters are extant in which he appealed to the civil authority during the same Fronde to furnish "a guard for the protection of a little farm" of the Congregation near Livry.[22] On another occasion he called upon a magistrate to protect the Priests of the Mission in their establishment at Toul against the pretensions of some religious.[23]

A further obligation of the state towards its citizens which St. Vincent emphasized, related to the administration

[17] *Lett.*, iv., 24, No. 1602, To M. Get, Feb. 8, 1658.

[18] Abelly, i., 252.

[19] The same letter was sent also to M. de Bautru, *intendant général de la justice* in Anjou.

[20] The question of a new tax detrimental to certain interests of the Congregation. *Lett.*, i., 533, No. 462, July 8, 1646.

[21] *Lett.*, ii., 444, No. 881, July 15, 1652.

[22] *Ibid.*, 456, No. 890, To Mgr. le Maréchal de Turenne, Aug., 1652; *Ibid.*, No. 891, To M. de Raineville, Maréchal de Camp.

[23] *Lett.*, i., 460, No. 397, Dec. 13, 1643.

of justice in the criminal courts. An example drawn from the mission activities of his priests will best illustrate this point.[24] The priests were conducting a mission in a certain town, inhabited largely by officers of justice and tavern-keepers. Flagrant abuses of justice were of daily occurrence. The judges frequented the taverns with the contending parties to eat and drink at their expense. The lawyers did not wish to plead their clients' causes except under the same conditions. Moreover, they prolonged their cases in needless quibbling, so that many a poor peasant had exhausted all his means before his case was ready for presentation to the judge. The police, too, were guilty of grave disorders and acts of injustice.

After decrying these abuses from the pulpit, the mission priests conferred with the chief magistrate of the place and remonstrated with him that the glory of God and obligations of conscience, as well as personal honor and interest, forbade the toleration of such conditions and urged him to inaugurate a radical reform. They finally persuaded him to use his authority and to impose rigid penalties on the lawyers, police, and other officers of justice who failed in their duty, to forbid the judges to go to the taverns with the contending parties, and to prohibit the useless prolongation of cases. The missionaries then assembled all the lawyers of the place and represented to them that they were sinning in a serious obligation and that they could not approach the sacraments of the Church until they had firmly resolved to correct the abuses and to obey the regulations that would be made in this matter.

The next step was to call an assembly of the police. These presented a lengthy list of the various duties of their charge. It contained twenty-five or thirty articles. On the margin of each the missionaries wrote in detail the manner of best fulfilling the different obligations. All the police officers submitted and, as a pledge of their sincerity, drew up a document to which they all subscribed. As a general re-

[24] The correction of public abuses and disorders as far as possible, formed part of the usual mission programme. Hence we are justified in considering the actions of the missionaries as having the full approval of St. Vincent, and even as fairly reflecting his own ideas and sentiments.

sult of these efforts of the missionaries, all the officers of justice approached the sacraments to the great edification of the people, and justice was conscientiously administered in this place for years to come.[25]

The judge, according to Vincent, was to be guided in his judgment solely by the merits of the case as presented to him in court. He was not to be influenced by any personal knowledge he might have concerning the affair. We read in one of his letters: "The notary who has written as the parties told him, ... although he knew the contrary, was obliged, nevertheless, to believe the parties of the contract; he was in the position of a judge who must put more faith in what the parties prove than in the contrary."[26]

We might add yet that Vincent de Paul believed that mercy should season justice even in crimes against the state. He considered it much more expedient that Cardinal Mazarin pardon the rebels of the Fronde, as did Henry III and Henry IV under similar circumstances, than that he proceed against them with all the rigor of the law and thus "throw oil into the fire and enflame the others," as did Charles VI.[27]

St. Vincent's personal attitude toward courts of justice was one of aloofness born of his unaggressive disposition (p. 26), and of distrust based on the expense and difficulty of obtaining justice. "The maxim of the Company," he writes in one of his letters,[28] "is to prefer loss to court proceedings." The lawyer employed to attend to the legal affairs of Saint-Lazare testified that he had never known St. Vincent, either in his own name as superior or in that of the community, to prosecute or defend a claim with warmth or eagerness, no matter how just his claim, nor how unjust the pretensions of others. He remembered, too, various cases where Vincent had deferred indefinitely the execution of court awards implying the payment of considerable sums, for fear of causing the ruin, as he said, of some family.

[25] Abelly, ii., 332-5.
[26] *Lett.*, i., 213, No. 206, To M. Bécu, June 17, 1638.
[27] *Lett.*, ii., 476, No. 906, To Card. Mazarin, Sept. 11, 1752.
[28] *Lett.*, i., 564, No. 484, To M. Bourdet, Supr. at Saint-Méen, Sept. 1, 1646.

Immediately after his ordination to the priesthood he was assigned to the pastorate of Tihl. A competitor had applied to the Holy See for the same position. Rather than bring the affair before an ecclesiastical court, Vincent peacefully renounced his claims and devoted himself to further study. St. Vincent and his young community had no sooner taken possession of Saint-Lazare than his title was unjustly contested by the religious of Saint-Victor. Only in deference to the advice of a saintly and trusted friend who had convinced him that God's honor more than personal interest was at stake, did St. Vincent consent to defend his rightful claim in court.

More astonishing still is his conduct regarding the loss of the farm of Orsigny in 1658. This farm had been donated to the estates of Saint-Lazare with the condition of paying a life annuity. St. Vincent had accepted it only in compliance with the earnest and incessant pleadings of a benefactor of the Congregation. After improving the property with a considerable outlay of money and labor, the community of Saint-Lazare was evicted from its possession without reimbursement of any kind. This entailed a loss calculated at about 50,000 livres. After the decision of the court had been rendered, one of the judges, favorable to Vincent's cause, urged him to appeal the case. Vincent replied: "O my God! far be it from me to do so." Before his brethren, in reference to the decision, he exclaimed: "Thou Thyself, O Lord, hast pronounced the sentence; it shall be, if Thou so desirest, irrevocable." And he urged his confrères to submit to it as they would to the judgment of God. Though fully conscious of the injustice, no pleading of friends, no consideration nor assurance of success in reversing the decision of the court, no guarantee against additional losses and expenses, could induce him to take further steps in the matter.

In a letter to M. Desbordes, counselor of the Parliament, he sums up the reasons for his refusal. Some of them are prompted by human prudence and considerations, others are based on supernatural motives. We cannot trust our advisers, though versed in law and well acquainted with our case, he says, for they assured us of success in the former

trial and we lost. The decision was rendered not on the merit of the case but according to a principle of the Parliament opposed to church property. We shall have to face the same judges again, and hence must expect to be judged by the same principle. We shall occasion scandal by causing the impression of being too attached to worldly possessions. We shall have two powerful adversaries to contend with. If we seek the Kingdom of God, nothing will be wanting to us; if the world takes from us on the one side, God will give on the other. Since the court has rendered its adverse decision one of its members has bequeathed to us an amount equal to the value of the farm. Finally, it is contrary to the advice of our Lord who does not wish his disciples to go to court; if I have already done so, it is because I could not in conscience abandon property so justly acquired and belonging to a community committed to my administration without doing all in my power to hold it, but God in the meantime has relieved me of this obligation by a decision of the supreme court of justice.[29]

St. Vincent did, however, institute court proceedings in extraordinary circumstances. His missionaries were disturbed in the possession of a former Benedictine abbey. St. Vincent vigorously refused to yield and was ready to take the matter into court and defend his title with all lawful means because, he said, the welfare of the Church and of the poor demanded it.[30] He urged one of his priests to collect certain tithes even though it should be necessary to go to court. "It is a privileged case," he wrote, "which obliges in conscience."[31]

In perfect accordance with the Catholic concept of the duties of the state and in virtue of the existing relations between Church and State, St. Vincent demanded that the civil authority meet its obligations also regarding the moral welfare of the people. As a member of the Council of Conscience, he addressed a letter to Count de Brienne asking him "to write to M. le comte d'Alais, to the parliament, and

[29] *Lett.*, iv., 141, No. 1693, Sept. 3, 1658; *Ibid.*, 245, No. 1771, Dec. 21, 1658.
[30] *Lett.*, i., 563, No. 484, To M. Bourdet Supr. at Saint-Méen, Sept. 1, 1646.
[31] *Lett.*, iii., 516, No. 1433, To M. Rivet, confrère at Saintes, July 29, 1657; *cf.* also *Ibid.*, 549, No. 1458, Aug. 26, 1657.

to the consuls of the city of Aix in Provence that they must suppress the scandalous conduct offensive to God and the honest people which occurred recently in the procession of Corpus Christi at Aix. . . ."[32] He also made efforts to exterminate blasphemy. Through his efforts the ordinances against this crime were renewed.

Vincent de Paul likewise did his utmost by private persuasion and public endeavor to eradicate duelling. He united his efforts to those of the Papal Nuncio in petitioning the Holy See formally to condemn the wicked practice by a special brief[33] and obtained the royal sanction for the association of nobles who had bound themselves by oath never to engage in a duel and to discourage the practice among others. Owing to his endeavors, one of the first acts of Louis XIV upon attaining his majority was to issue an edict against duelling.

During these turbulent times, many took the liberty to talk as they pleased on religion and politics. Thus the door was opened for the publication of books and pamphlets against faith, good morals, and the state. St. Vincent presented this evil to the Council of Conscience and had it suppressed. An order was issued to seize immoral books, together with the prohibition to print or sell them. The corrupt stage was another evil which St. Vincent did not overlook and to which he directed the attention of the state. Some of the actors "represented on the stage things not only indecent, but scandalous, and which could not be said, nor heard, nor seen, without grave offence to God." Through the efforts of St. Vincent they were strictly forbidden.[34]

It would be a false estimate of St. Vincent if we were to get the impression from his relations with the state that he, in his capacity of either priest or dispenser of charity, designedly took an active part in politics. On the contrary, he was opposed in principle to such a course. We find a

[32] *Lett.*, i., 497, No. 430, June 2, 1645.

[33] *Lett.*, iii., 282, No. 1239, To M. Jolly, May 19, 1656.

[34] Abelly, ii., 612-13. In connection with these socio-moral evils, it is interesting to note that St. Vincent also had immodest fashions *(gorges découvertes)* to cope with, as he mentions casually and very briefly in two of his letters while relating the success of the mission given by the Mission Priests to the royal court at Saint Germain-en-Laye. *Lett.*, i., 195, No. 189, To M. Lambert, Feb. 20, 1638; *Ibid.*, 197, No. 191, To M. Lucas, Feb. 21, 1638.

clear and definite expression of his mind on this point in a letter to one of his brethren. We may well quote it at some length. He says: "What shall I say to you regarding the conference you have had with the ambassador concerning the Italian prelate . . . except that we have as our rule and practice in this delicate matter, by the mercy of God, never to meddle with the affairs of the state nor even to speak of them? And this: 1. Because *quod supra nos, nihil ad nos* [what is beyond us does not concern us]; 2. because it is not the business of poor priests, as we, to meddle with, or speak about, other things than those which concern our calling; 3. because the affairs of the princes are mysteries which we must respect and not examine in detail; 4. because most people offend God by judging the actions of others, especially of the great, not knowing the reasons which prompted them . . .; 5. all the things that we do are problematical, except those determined by Holy Scripture [Besides this, there is no law of infallibility in one's opinion . . . The Son of God, the model according to which we ought to form our lives, always remained silent regarding the government of the princes, though they were pagans and idolaters]; 6. because He [the Son of God] made known to the Apostles that they ought not to meddle curiously with that which concerns, not only the affairs of the princes, but also those of an individual, when He told them, speaking of another: *Si eum volo manere, quid ad te?* [If I wish that he remain, what is it to you?] For all these reasons and indefinite others, I beg you, sir, to remain faithful to our humble practice never to converse about, much less to interfere, either by word or writing, with the affairs of the princes and [I beg you] to make known to the ambassador, if he does you the honor of speaking to you about it, that such is the practice of our little Company. . . . And finally . . . I beg you, . . . to ask of God . . . that He grant the Company grace always to be faithful in the observance of this little rule."[35]

We may ask ourselves how St. Vincent reconciled this

[35] *Lett.*, i., 292-3, No. 275, To M. le Breton at Rome, Feb. 26, 1640. *Cf.* also *Ibid.*, 298, No. 279, Mar. 1, 1640; *Ibid.*, 436, No. 373, To M. Codoing at Rome, Dec. 25, 1642.

doctrine with his later position as member of the Council of Conscience and with his public efforts for peace during the Fronde. The answer is evident. He was so far from glorying in his appointment to the queen's Council that he accepted it and retained it only with the greatest reluctance and in deference to the queen's commands. It was for him, not the fulfilment of personal desire and ambition, but a source of pain and embarrassment. He frequently besought the queen to grant him the favor, as he styled it, of discharging him. He disclosed to a person of confidence that, from the time of his appointment, he never offered up the Sacrifice of Holy Mass without praying for this same grace. Speaking one day of his office, he said: "I ask of God that I be considered a fool, as in reality I am, in order that I be no longer employed in this position, and that I may have more leisure to do penance and less occasion to set a bad example, than at present, to our little Company." After his conference with Mazarin and his subsequent journey into the country during the troubles of the Fronde, it was rumored in the city that he had been disgraced at court. An ecclesiastical friend later congratulated him that such was not the case. Vincent struck his breast and said: "O wretch that I am, I am not worthy of this favor!"[36]

He was prompted to assume an active interest in the affairs of state during the Fronde by the example of other saintly men of history who left their solitude and went to the court of princes and emperors when it was a question of pacifying contending factions and procuring public peace and tranquillity. He was aware, too, of his influence, with the good bishops of France, the well-meaning princes of the realm, and with the royal court, and beheld the misery which he could confidently hope to avert by using this influence. Under these circumstances he considered it his duty to act.

[36] Abelly, i., 256-7.

CHAPTER III

Poverty

The labors of St. Vincent centered around the poor. His efforts throughout the long period of his social activity were consecrated, we might say, exclusively to their spiritual and material relief. It is true, he reluctantly devoted a part of his time for a number of years to the service of the queen mother as member of the council of Conscience. He commissioned his brethren to preach a mission before the royal court at Saint-Germain; but neither was this of his choosing. The brethren conducted missions in episcopal cities; but only in a few extraordinary cases when it could not prudently be evaded.[1]

Apart from these exceptions, to better the lot of the poor and needy was the end of all his labors, whether in the field of missionary activities, education, or social relief. He once told his brethren that the principal duty of their state of life was to labor for the salvation of the poor country people; all else was but accessory and instrumental to this.[2] "My brethren," he said again, "the poor are our portion . . . O blessed rules of the Mission which engage us to serve the country to the exclusion of the cities!"[3]

The queen mother requested him to send some of his priests to Metz to conduct a mission there. He answered: "Madame, your Majesty does not know then that the poor priests of the Mission are only for the poor people of the country."[4] The formula of profession which St. Vincent drafted for his religious comprised the three customary vows of religion to which is added a fourth, expressed in the

[1] *V.g.*, at Annecy, *Lett.*, i., 331, No. 299, To M. Codoing at Annecy, July 26, 1640; at Tréguier, *Lett.*, iii., 278, No. 1235, To M. Dupont at Tréguier, May 13, 1656; at Fossano, *Lett.*, iii., 656, No. 1534, To M. Martin at Turin, Nov. 9, 1657.

[2] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 29, No. 18, Oct. 25, 1643.

[3] *Ibid.*, 264, No. 82, May 17, 1658.

[4] *Ibid.*, 263, No. 82, May 17, 1658.

words: "I vow, moreover, to devote myself to the salvation of the poor of the country all the time of my life . . ."[5] He assigned some of the Daughters of Charity to teaching; but only among the poor. He organized his bands of visiting nurses; but, again, only for the poor.[6] In a word, to be poor was the first requisite in one seeking the aid of St. Vincent.

He inspired his Daughters of Charity with the same love and preference for the poor. He requested one of them to enter the service of Duchess d'Aiguillon, the niece of Cardinal Richelieu, and to assist her at the same time in her works of charity. The Sister begged to be excused saying she had left father and mother in order to serve the poor for the love of God. St. Vincent then appointed a second one to the position. She promptly returned and asked likewise to be allowed to serve the poor exclusively, but was persuaded to remain there for a few days on trial.[7] Three of the Sisters had been sent to Poland. The queen wished to retain one for her personal service, but received the reply: "Madame, what do you say? There are only three of us for the service of the poor and you have so many others in your kingdom more capable than we to serve your Majesty! Permit us, Madame, to do here what God demands of us and what we do elsewhere." When the queen insisted, she continued: "Pardon me, Madame, but we have dedicated ourselves to God for the service of the poor."[8] St. Vincent once asked a dying Sister if she had any fear or remorse of conscience. "No, Father," was the reply, "nothing at all except that I took too great a pleasure in serving the poor."[9]

In view of these facts, it will be more than interesting to consider St. Vincent's ideas on social poverty. In the first place, poverty was not in itself a disgrace, nor were the poor contemptible, in his eyes. On the contrary, he terms them "the well-beloved of God," "the portion" and "the lords and masters" of his priests and social workers to whom "we

[5] Voveo me praeterea pauperum rusticanorum saluti toto vitae tempore in dicta Congregatione vacaturum (Bougaud, ii., 134).

[6] An exception is made in favor of some wealthy families at le Quinze-Vingts, but St. Vincent had no choice in the matter. *Lett.*, i., 312, No. 289, To Mlle. le Gras (1640).

[7] *Lett.*, i., 132, No. 129, To Mlle. le Gras, May 27, 1636.

[8] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 516, No. 43, Feb. 2, 1653.

[9] *Ibid.*, 597, No. 51, May 25, 1654.

are unworthy to render our humble services," but whom, nevertheless, we are obliged "to serve with respect, as our masters, and with devotion, because they represent to us the person of our Lord Who has said: What you will do to the least of mine, I shall consider as done to Me."[10]

As to the causes of poverty, St. Vincent seems not to have entered into the more technical social and economic processes which are frequently so productive of poverty, and which were at work in France during the seventeenth century. Such were, for example, practically unrestricted competition, the relation of the supply of labor to its demand, the growing exclusiveness of the labor organizations.

He did, indeed, discuss the problem of unemployment, but not from a technical point of view. He said in a conference to the Daughters of Charity: "I can assure you that no one has ever been seen who has not had more than enough wherewith to live when he wished to labor for it."[11] According to this statement, therefore, a person suffers poverty because he either will not or cannot earn a livelihood by honest work. Those who are voluntarily idle, the professional tramp and beggar, are undeserving of alms; they must work. Those who cannot work—the young, the aged, the invalid, the cripple, and the unemployed during the period of enforced unemployment—alone can lay a just claim to charitable assistance.

Another cause of poverty which Vincent admitted was, as we have seen (p. 61), war with its accompanying evils, resulting from disregard for law and order.

But to his mind an evil more basic still and more responsible for public calamities than insubordination to legitimate

[10] *Cf. e.g.*, Abelly, iii., 170; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 264, No. 82, May 17, 1658; *Lett.*, ii., 435, No. 876, To M. d'Horgny at Rome, June 13, 1652; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 186, No. 61, Mar. 16, 1656; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 56, No. 8, June 14, 1642; *Ibid.*, ii., 312, No. 79, Nov. 11, 1657. St. Vincent lays no claim to originality in calling the poor his "lords and masters." He told his Daughters of Charity of the great pleasure he had one day of listening to a reading on the vows of the Hospitallers. "Behold the formula of their vows," he continued, "'I, Brother N. N., vow and promise to God to keep, all my life, poverty, chastity, and obedience, and to serve *our masters the poor.*'" *Ibid.*, i., 24-5, No. 3, July 19, 1640. Speaking again to the Daughters, he said: "There is a certain Company, I do not remember the name, which calls the poor *our lords and our masters.*" *Ibid.*, ii., 312, No. 79, Nov. 11, 1657.

[11] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 423, No. 37, Nov. 28, 1649.

civil authority was rebellion against divine authority—sin. He argued that peace and prosperity are blessings of God, but God, offended by the sins of a people, withholds His blessings and public calamity ensues,—war, famine and poverty; hence, to insure lasting peace and prosperity, sin must be removed and the anger of God appeased. "Our sins without doubt are the cause" of the defeat that Poland has suffered at the hands of the Swedish king, he told his confrères.[12] On another occasion he told them that, as God made use of the Goths and the Vandals of old to punish the Church for the sins of the people and the clergy, so now, during the Thirty Years' War, the king of Sweden has risen to punish us for our disorders. "Yes, O Lord!" he continues, "it is we who have provoked Thy anger; it is our sins that have brought on these calamities."[13]

Prompted by this conviction he had recourse to God in earnest prayer; he offered up his almsgivings, his fasts and other works of penance to make satisfaction to the divine Majesty for the sins of his fellow men, and thus to appease His justice and obtain peace. He invited all the holy and well-meaning persons of his acquaintance to do likewise. At Saint-Lazare, when the internal disorders were at their height, he ordered that three of the brethren—a priest, a cleric and a lay brother—fast each day in reparation for sin; moreover, that the priest celebrate Mass and the other two receive Holy Communion for the same intention. He took his turn with the others in spite of his weakness and advanced age.[14]

Even individual cases of poverty he was wont to regard as the immediate results of sin. Speaking one day to his assembled confrères, he told them how the holy life and good

[12] Abelly, ii., 253.

[13] *Ibid.*, 288-9.

[14] This same conviction had a further and a more far-reaching influence on his actions. United with his zeal for the glory of God and for the salvation of souls, the thought that sin is the basic and principal cause of human misery, material as well as spiritual, inspired him with a holy enthusiasm and an indomitable courage to continue his works which were immediately directed toward the extirpation of sin; namely, his missionary and educational efforts and, what were intimately connected with the former, his efforts for the reform of the clergy. It may well be that even the beginnings of these works were inspired by the same thought, but it is not evident that he had such clear ideas on the subject so early in his career.

works of parents frequently merit God's graces and blessings for their children; "on the other hand," he continued, "there are persons, a man and wife, who are honest, who lead good lives and, nevertheless, everything slips away from them, they succeed in nothing; and whence does this come? The punishment of God which their parents have merited for some grave fault they committed, passes on to their children, as is written: God will chastise the sinner in his children to the seventh generation."[15]

We must not infer from this, however, that St. Vincent looked upon all cases of poverty as a punishment for sin. He himself forbids such an inference when he says: "I do not wish to say that those who are comfortably situated are just, or that all those who are in need are unjust, since by the providence of God it frequently happens that the wicked enjoy prosperity while the just suffer adversity."[16]

Equally false would be the inference that St. Vincent held, either in theory or practice, that poverty should not be alleviated but that the judgments of God should be allowed to take their course. His whole active career belies such a conclusion. The conviction that poverty and adversity in general, are a punishment for sin, did not, therefore, keep him from alleviating it, but it did impel him to labor assiduously for the removal of the cause, i. e., for the extirpation of sin.

We see here that Vincent reduces the whole complex of social disorders and social problems to their last cause and there applies the remedy. The question suggests itself: Was this his usual mode of procedure? Was he as careful in applying the remedy to the intermediate and more proximate causes of an evil, or was he influenced here, too, by his usual conservatism? In other words, did he content himself with the endeavor to ameliorate the lot of the victims of adversity and misfortune, or did he usually aim at staying the social forces and social processes that were immediately responsible for them?

It is certain that St. Vincent's practical mind was prone to adopt the latter course. There was some difficulty with

[15] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 258, No. 81, Nov. 25, 1657
[16] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 423, No. 37, Nov. 28, 1649.

a community of women; he wrote to Mlle. le Gras concerning it: "It is necessary to ascertain gently the *source of the evil* and advise the remedies."[17] We have seen how he considered submission to civil authority fundamentally essential to the material well-being of the people and how he strove in consequence to promote it. In his religious reform, he very soon became aware that, if his missionary endeavors were to effect abiding results on the morals of the people, the clergy must first be reformed. He saw, too, the futility of attempting the reform of the older clergy who had become settled in their ways; he must set to work at an earlier period of their lives when their minds and characters are still pliable. Hence he conceived the idea of establishing ecclesiastical seminaries for the training of worthy candidates for the priesthood. He himself said on this point to the members of his Congregation: "We never would have undertaken the work of ordinations and ecclesiastical seminaries if we had not judged it necessary to maintain the people and to conserve the fruit produced by the missions, imitating in this respect the great conquerors who leave garrisons in the places they have taken for fear of losing what they have taken with so much labor."[18]

To rid society permanently of the burden of the professional tramp and beggar the young must early learn to gain an honest livelihood; they must learn a trade. St. Vincent, therefore, fostered and promoted industrial training among the poor boys. The crops had been destroyed and the farms devastated by the raids of the soldiers. The peasants were reduced to extreme poverty and hunger, with scanty hopes of improving their condition the following year. St. Vincent procured for them seeds and implements. The wars and the consequent general unrest were a fruitful source of illegitimacy; St. Vincent endeavored to afford protection and shelter to girls who were in danger of being robbed by violence of their virtue, or who, driven by hunger, were willing to sell their honor for a pot of porridge.

These examples are ample proof of the conviction of St.

[17] *Lett.*, i., 93, No. 84, Oct. 29, 1634.

[18] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 29-30, No. 18, Oct. 25, 1643.

Vincent that the true cure of an evil is its prevention. Still, from the evidence on record, or, possibly, owing to the lack of all the evidence, we are tempted to say that he did not in all cases apply the remedy at the root of the evil. He may have been prevented from doing so by unrecorded circumstances. He may, too, have seen the futility of the attempt. But, whatever the reason, the fact remains, if the records are complete. He did not, for example, attempt the solution of the problem of unemployment on a large scale. Perhaps he was aware of the activities of Theophraste Renaudot[19] in this field; but, though contemporaries, there is no record of their having ever met, much less of having coöperated for the attainment of a common purpose. He provided for the burial of the dead and for the removal of filth in the war-stricken provinces of the North and on the battle fields in the vicinity of Paris; but as far as we know he did not labor in the city for the improvement of housing conditions among the poor nor for the general betterment of sanitary conditions.

[19] French physician and philanthropist, born at Loudun, 1586. He studied surgery in Paris and in 1606 received the doctor's degree at Montpellier. In 1612 he was summoned to Paris by Richelieu because of his medical reputation and his philanthropy. He was named physician in ordinary to the King and was asked to organize a plan of public assistance. In 1617 he obtained the privilege of opening an intelligence office which served as an employment bureau and as a place where the poor might make known their needs and where charitable persons might learn the names and needs of deserving poor. In 1618 he received the title of commissioner general of the poor of the realm. In 1628 he joined the Catholic Church. He now added to his intelligence office, a pawnshop and an auction house. Under the protection of Richelieu, he established the first French newspaper, the *Gazette* (1631), which appeared weekly and contained political and foreign news and a catalogue of goods for sale—the first attempt to combine advertising and news items. In 1637 he opened in Paris the first *Mons Pietatis,* an institution widespread in Italy, which enabled the poor to borrow money at a nominal rate of interest. He also established a free dispensary, which was in itself nothing new in the field of charity (*Cf., v.g.,* Lallemand, iv., Part II., 379), and a *consultation charitable*, where, in concert with fifteen other physicians, free medical advice was given. In 1640 the medical faculty launched an organized campaign of opposition against the "medical heretic of Montpellier." After the death of his patrons, Richelieu and Louis XIII, the Parliament revoked the letters patent for his intelligence office and his *Mons Pietatis*, and forbade him the practice of medicine in Paris. The *Gazette* continued, and in 1646 he was appointed historiographer to the king by Mazarin. He died Oct. 25, 1653. He was a pioneer in relief work, journalism and medicine. *Cf.* Eugene Hatin, *Théophraste Renaudot,* Paris, 1883; Gilles de la Tourette, *Théophraste Renaudot d'après des documents inédits,* Paris, 1884; Idem *La vie et les oeuvres de Théophraste Renaudot fondateur des consultations charitables,* Paris, 1892.

St. Vincent did not aim at the total elimination of poverty, nor will his principles lead to such a result. It was his endeavor merely to fulfil, as he expressed it, "the commandment which God gives us in the fifteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, viz., to see to it that we have no poor amongst us who beg."[20]

[20] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 428, St. Vincent's words are evidently an adaptation of Deuter. 15.4: "And there shall be no poor nor beggar among you."

CHAPTER IV

Charity

Active charity, as taught by St. Vincent de Paul and exemplified in his life, was not something merely superficial or accidental in the practical life of a Christian, but an integral, organic part of Christian teaching and the necessary expression of a lively faith. The charity he preached and practised was the charity of the Gospel, "the charity which consists not only in the love of God but also in that of one's neighbor and particularly of the poor," the charity which "cannot remain inactive," which "does not permit us to see our brethren or our friends in spiritual or corporal need without manifesting our love towards them," the charity, in a word, which the Son of God came "to establish in us and among us by His example and by His teaching."[1]

"He who loves his neighbors," he told the Ladies of Charity, "has observed the full law."[2] "Give me a man," he said to the members of his Congregation, "who loves God alone, a soul who, wrapt in contemplation, does not consider his neighbor, but who, finding a very great pleasure in this manner of serving God Who alone appears amiable to him, stops to enjoy this infinite source of sweetness; and (give me) another who unites love of neighbor with that of God, no matter how rough and rude he be, and tell me, I pray you, which is the purest of these two loves? Without doubt, that of the latter, for he fulfils the law more perfectly than the former; he loves God and his neighbor—what more can he do?—while the former loves only God. We ought then to give ourselves to God in order that He impress these truths upon our souls, that He direct our lives according to this perfect love and make us practise its works."[3]

[1] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 294, No. 2, July 5, 1646; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 474, No. 107, May 30, 1659.
[2] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 224, No. 8, 1645.
[3] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 471, No. 107, May 30, 1659.

But Vincent is more emphatic still in stressing the obligations of Christian charity. In the same conference to his brethren, he said: "Christians, being members of the same body and members of one another, should sympathize among themselves. Yes, to be a Christian and to see a brother in distress and not weep with him and commiserate with his illness is to be devoid of charity, is to be a Christian in appearance only, is to be without humility, is to be worse than the brute creation." It is true, he speaks here directly only of interior sentiments of charity and not of works. But in perfect accord with his own thoughts, we can apply the above words with equal reason to charitable works; for he says further in the same conference: "It is not sufficient to have charity in one's heart and express it in words; it must pass into action and into actual and true expression, even to the giving of one's life, if necessary, as our Lord gave His."[4]

St. Vincent further shows the importance of active charity by giving it precedence over other virtues and good works and by considering it even the compendium of all virtue. "O my Sisters," he writes, "how good it is not to do anything but to exercise charity! This is to practise all the virtues together."[5] He begged our Divine Savior to give him and his confrères the disposition to be ready at all times "to lay aside all other occupation in order to exercise the works of charity."[6] He frequently made practical application of this principle in his conferences to his Daughters of Charity. He insisted on uniformity in the observance of their rule; still he was ever ready that an exception be made, when necessary, in favor of charity, for, as he himself says, "charity is above all the rules and all things must yield to it."[7] He told one of the Sisters to omit the spiritual retreat if it interfered with the care of the sick, for "the practice of charity, when it is necessary, as that of assisting the suffering members of our Lord, is preferable to any other exercise."[8] He told another not to be uneasy if the care of the

[4] *Ibid.*, 480, 482.
[5] *Lett.*, iv., 490, No. 1965, To Sr. Nicolle Haran at Nantes, Nov. 8, 1659.
[6] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 484, No. 107, May 30, 1659.
[7] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 505-6, No. 92, Oct. 6, 1658.
[8] *Lett.*, iii., 593, No. 1490, To Sr. Francoise Mesnage at Nantes, Sept. 29, 1657.

poor prevented her from hearing Mass, "for God prefers mercy to sacrifice."[9] To quit prayer in order to go on an errand of charity is, he says, "to quit God for God."[10]

St. Vincent makes numerous other statements to the same effect throughout his conferences to his Daughters of Charity.[11] He sums up his general attitude on the point when he writes in one of his letters: "Do not worry if your work hinders you from being exact in your prayers and in the observance of the rules, because you must lay aside all things for charity since it is the queen of virtues; but when it permits you to observe the rule without prejudice to the care of the sick, you must do so in order to render yourself more pleasing to God and, in consequence, more fit to work for the salvation and the relief of the poor."[12]

But, withal, the charity of St. Vincent was well regulated both in itself and in its relation to the other virtues. In the first place, charity was not to be overdone. "There is no charity," he writes, ". . . which permits us to undertake more than we can reasonably accomplish."[13] He cautions the Ladies of Charity to use prudent moderation in entering new fields of work, otherwise "one allows the most useful to perish and finally all come to naught."[14] Secondly, when he was obliged to choose, for example, between charity and justice, he chose the latter, as the moral order demands. He

[9] *Lett.*, iv., 9, No. 1586, To Sr. Nicolle Haran at Nantes, Jan. 16, 1658.

[10] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 506, No. 92, Oct. 6, 1658.

[11] Cf., v.g., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, vol. i., pp. 5, 33, 41, 63, 72-3, 186, 274, 281-2, 373, 632; *Ibid.*, vol. ii., pp. 169, 190, 312, 505, 520-1. He urges them not to scruple to omit their usual prayers, to absent themselves from the community morning prayers and from sermons and spiritual conferences, and to remain away from Mass, even on Sundays and holy days, when the care of the sick demands it; in a word, they are not to consider themselves hampered in the necessary care of the sick by any point of their rule. In fact the rule itself demands that "they ought to postpone" their spiritual exercises "in favor of the necessary assistance of the poor sick" (*Règles Communes*, chap. vii., art. 1). And the special rule, drawn up for the Sisters of the Parishes, calls their particular attention to the fact that they are "to prefer the service of the poor sick to any other exercise, be it corporal or spiritual, and not to scruple to encroach upon, or to defer, all for it, provided it be the pressing need of the sick and not sloth or exterior dissipation" that suggests it (*Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses*, chap. xviii., art. 1).

[12] *Lett.*, iv., 281, No. 1798, To Sr. Nicolle Haran at Nantes, Feb. 12, 1659.

[13] *Lett.*, i., 317, No. 292, To M. du Coudray at Toul, June 17, 1640.

[14] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 214-6, No. 6, July 11, 1657.

wrote thus to one of the brethren: "As regards the two thousand livres which you have received from M. de Saint-Nicholas for the religious women, in the name of God, sir, do not divert it to any other use under any pretext of charity whatsoever. There is no charity which should not be accompanied by justice."[15] "The duties of justice are preferable to those of charity," he said warning Frère Barreau to employ the money sent him only in accordance with the intentions of the donors.[16]

He himself relates that he once omitted an act of charity in order to fulfil a promise he had made, though by so doing he incurred the displeasure of an influential person. "Remember particularly to pray to God for me," he says, "who, finding myself yesterday obliged at the same time to fulfil a promise I had made and to perform an act of charity towards a person who is in a position to do us either much good or much harm, and not being able to satisfy both, I omitted the act of charity to keep my promise, for which this person is still very discontented."[17] Charity must also be subject to obedience. He instructs the Daughters of Charity never to receive the sick contrary to the orders of the Ladies of Charity.[18]

The right of private property did not mean the right of absolute ownership to the mind of St. Vincent. Material prosperity carried with it duties and responsibilities toward those less blessed with the goods of this world. That he was clearly conscious of these obligations cannot be doubted. His employment of the wealthy in the service and relief of the sick and poor is practical proof thereof. Moreover, in his sketches for conferences to the Ladies of Charity, we twice find the words: *Si non pavisti, occidisti* [If you have not fed, you have killed].[19] He is appealing to them for money in behalf of the foundlings. These, he says, are in

[15] *Lett.*, i., 316-7, No. 292, M. du Coudray at Toul, June 17, 1640.

[16] *Lett.*, iv., 386, No. 1872, June 27, 1659, To Frère Barreau in Algiers, a member of the Congregation, appointed Consul of Algiers through the intervention of St. Vincent in order to be in a position to render some little assistance to the Christian captives.

[17] Abelly, iii., 357.

[18] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 319.

[19] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 657; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 218, No. 7.

extreme necessity because they have been abandoned by father and mother. Hence arises the strict moral obligation to come to their assistance, for, he continues in explanation of the above words, "one can kill a poor child in two ways: either by a violent death, or by refusing to give it nourishment."

He is less clear in assigning the particular reason or motive from which spring the obligations of riches. He does not, however, denounce the rich and their possessions in bitter terms,[20] nor does he advocate the adoption of any economic principle that would eventually result in a more just and equal distribution of wealth. The former method of procedure would have been contrary to his character, the latter foreign to his sphere of activity. Nor do extant records reveal that he even urged directly and explicitly the Christian concept of the stewardship of property.[21] He seems, in fact, not to have had any particular or distinctive reason on which he based the obligations of wealth; no reason which could not be applied to the other obligations of charity as well.[22] On the one hand, he beheld the need and suffering of the people; on the other, he enjoyed the favor of many who were able to furnish means toward the relief of this misery. These, then, he approached with the appeals which, under the circumstances, were likely to be the most efficacious.

As is seen from his conferences to the Ladies of Charity, his appeals were partly natural and partly supernatural.

[20] He says, it is true, that the world is too much engrossed in the material, and recalls our Savior's teaching regarding the spiritual dangers of material riches—*Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 113-4, No. 63, Nov. 2, 1655; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 535-6, No. 114, Aug. 31, 1659; *Ibid.*, 546-8, No. 115, Sept. 2, 1659. But these words are addressed to the members of his Congregation and to his Daughters of Charity, when explaining to them the poverty which they should practice in conformity with their vows and their state of life.

[21] He applies the term but once, and, in doing so, he is addressing, not the rich, but the members of his Congregation, and is speaking, not of worldly possessions in general, but of religious houses whose temporalities are especially destined for the use of the poor. *Avis et Confér aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 629, No. 125.

[22] He calls the Ladies of Charity "the Mothers of the Poor" on one occasion (*Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 214, No. 6, July 11, 1657), but it is not clear from the context whether he applies this term to them because of their wealth, and hence indirectly to all similarly situated, or because of their special choice and pledge to assist the poor.

He made a strong and effectual appeal to their maternal instincts in behalf of the foundlings.[23] He appealed to their national pride by telling them not to countenance in Paris a practice they justly censured among the Turks—the sale of human beings.[24] He appealed to their religious pride by urging them to free the Church of the cruelty of which Herod made himself guilty.[25] He appealed to their pride again by telling them of the raillery to which they would expose themselves should they discontinue an undertaking.[26] He appealed to their selfishness by recalling the words of Sacred Scripture that one who practises charity will himself never be reduced to indigence. He also dwelt on the pleasure and honor accruing to them from almsgiving, and insinuated the sacredness of human life.[27]

As supernatural motives, he assured the Ladies of Charity that their work had been inspired by God and was the continuation of our Savior's activities during His mortal life; hence they should devote themselves to it with joy and enthusiasm, and not permit it to come to naught.[28] He told them, too, that material relief often paves the way for the eternal salvation of the poor.[29] And, finally, he recalled the reward awaiting those to whom Christ will be able to say on Judgment Day: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, . . . for I was hungry and you gave Me to eat, etc.," and, as the counterpart, he told them: "One can lose heaven by sins of omission as well as commission, and because of omitting to assist the poor it will be said, 'Depart, ye cursed!' "[30]

[23] Abelly, i., 210, and *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 200, No. 5, an. 1648.

[24] *Ibid.*, 219, No. 7, III. He refers to the abuse at Paris of selling the foundlings for a paltry sum—8, 20, or 30 sous.

[25] The Massacre of the Infants. *Ibid.*, IV.

[26] *Ibid.*, 223, No. 8, an. 1645.

[27] *Ibid.*, 204, No. 6; 224, No. 8; 231, No. 11.

[28] Abelly, ii., 472-5; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 207-10, No. 6; *Ibid.*, 219, V., No. 7, an. 1638; *Ibid.*, 232, No. 12.

[29] Abelly, ii., 467; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 202-03, No. 6, July 11, 1657.

[30] Abelly, ii., 470; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 205, No. 6, July 11, 1657; *cf.* also *Ibid.*, 223-4, No. 8, 1645 and 230-1, No. 11.

SECTION II

The Principles of Saint Vincent de Paul in Social Service

We look in vain in the correspondence and conferences of St. Vincent de Paul for a definite set of concisely formulated principles of social service. We should, in fact, be surprised to find them, knowing as we do, the eminently practical bent of his mind. Still the study of his words and works reveals certain convictions which guided him in the various phases of relief. These convictions I take the liberty of calling his principles in social service. I have endeavored to group them around their respective heads for the sake of clearness, while at the same time submitting each to a complete critical study.

CHAPTER I

The Service of the Poor

1. *The Supernatural in Social Service*

Vincent de Paul was a man of great personal sanctity. The supernatural permeated his soul and motivated his actions in an extraordinary degree. He saw with the eyes of faith; he acted from motives of faith. In all his deeds he was distinctly conscious of a supernatural end—the glory of God, the sanctification and salvation of his own soul and that of his neighbor. Hence also the supernatural exercised a direct and distinct influence on his social activities.

In the first place, he based his work on the teachings of the Gospel and looked upon the aggregate of his activities as the continuation of our Savior's public ministry. He explained the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. v, vi, vii) to his brethren and told them that therein were contained the principles and maxims they had pledged themselves to observe and practice in the work of their own sanctification and in the service of their neighbor.[1] "All the points of the rule," he assures them again, "are taken from the Gospel; . . . they all tend to conform our conduct to that of Jesus Christ."[2]

"I cannot refrain from ever contemplating this prototype of charity" (i. e., Christ), he said in one of his conferences.[3] And this contemplation did not remain within the realms of thought and meditation, but manifested itself in a definite and conscious endeavor to imitate the Prototype and to continue His mission of charity. "The purpose of the

[1] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 343-9, No. 96, Feb. 14, 1659; cf. also *Ibid.*, 510, No. 112, Aug. 22, 1659; 522, No. 113, Aug. 29, 1659.

[2] *Avis et Confér aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 262, No. 82, May 17, 1658; cf. also *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 269, No. 25, May 30, 1647; *Ibid.* ii., 442, No. 87, May 30, 1658.

[3] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 479, No. 107, May 30, 1659.

Company," he says, "is to imitate our Lord in as far as poor and wretched persons can do so. . . . We must strive to conform our thoughts, our works and our intentions to His."[4] And in the course of the same conference, he continues to draw a comparison between the mission activities of Christ and those of his Congregation. "To be true Daughters of Charity," he says again, "you must do what the Son of God did upon earth. And what did He do especially? . . . He labored continually for fellow man, visiting and curing the sick and instructing the poor for their salvation."[5] His conferences to the Daughters and Ladies of Charity abound in similar expressions.[6]

Since the practice of charity was, in the estimation of Vincent de Paul, the continuation of our Saviour's mission, he necessarily considered it a sublime and holy vocation. And, indeed, he seems never to have tired in extolling its dignity and sanctity. "This state (the life of a Daughter of Charity), my dear Sisters, is so great," he writes in one of his letters, "that human understanding is unable to conceive anything greater in a poor creature upon earth."[7] "What is done in charity is done for God," "you serve Jesus Christ in the person of the poor," "we ought to consider the poor as our lords and masters," "the service of the poor is a divine and honorable calling,"—these and similar expressions are found dispersed throughout his letters and conferences.[8]

As the natural sequel to this view, St. Vincent demanded a virtuous life of those who were engaged in active charity under his direction. In all his constitutions we find special provisions to this effect. In the regulations for the conference of charity at Châtillon-les-Dombes,[9] for example, we read: "The confraternity shall be composed of *women* . . .

[4] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 306, No. 94, Dec. 6, 1658.
[5] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 15, No. 2, July 5, 1640.
[6] V.g., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 520; *Ibid.* ii., 95, 97, 101, 165, 189; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 210, 213, 230, 233, 240.
[7] *Lett.*, ii., 29, No. 546, To the Daughters of Charity at Nantes, Apr. 24, 1647.
[8] V.g., *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 186, No. 61, Mar. 16, 1656; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 215, No. 21, Feb. 13, 1646; *Ibid.*, 217, No. 21, Feb. 13, 1646; *Ibid.*, 601, No. 51, May 25, 1654.
[9] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 387, sqq.

of known piety and virtue," and the women chosen to remain with the bedridden sick shall be *"of a virtuous life and women of devotion."* The same regulations prescribe the spiritual exercises for the monthly meetings and for the daily life of the individual members. They are instructed to recite a specified morning and evening prayer, to attend Mass daily if possible, to read daily a chapter of St. Francis de Sales' Philothea, to walk constantly in the presence of God, to practise humility, charity and simplicity towards all, and to receive the sacraments four times a year. One constitution of unknown date urges the lady whose turn it is to serve the sick "to attend Mass and receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, or, at least, to make an act of contrition," before entering upon her duties for the day.[10] In the beginning, at least, St. Vincent excluded from membership those who "frequented the show, the comedy and other dangerous pastimes."[11] Throughout his conferences for the Ladies as well as for the Daughters of Charity, he proposes motives for striving after higher perfection together with the means of attaining it.

The influence of the supernatural is also seen to affect the motive which St. Vincent insisted upon in the practice of charity. He did not ignore the natural but he persistently urged the supernatural.

The fundamental motive that he repeats again and again to his Daughters of Charity is the consideration that they have been destined to serve our Savior corporally and spiritually in the person of the poor sick. Their love for God must impel them to perform their duties of charity faithfully, regardless of the praise and blame of men and in spite of natural disgust and repugnance.[12] Another motive that he frequently recalls is the thought that a life of charity is the best preparation for a happy death. "We

[10] *Ibid.*, 385. Whatever the reason, the constitutions drafted for the confraternities of both men and women, are less explicit in prescribing spiritual devotions for the individual members. They are merely admonished to recite five *Paters* and *Aves* daily and to receive the Sacraments on the day of their monthly meetings. *Ibid.*, 415, 425, 432.

[11] *Ibid.*, 211, No. 6, Conference to Ladies of Charity, July 11, 1657.

[12] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 556-7, No. 47, June 3, 1653; *Ibid.*, ii., 615, *Règles Particulières, aux Soeurs de Paroisses, X.*

cannot better assure our eternal happiness," he writes, "than by living and dying in the service of the poor."[13]

A further influence of the supernatural on the relief work of St. Vincent is seen in the importance he lays on caring for the spiritual needs of the sick and poor. This feature is given equal prominence with corporal assistance in all his relief organizations. The principal end of the Daughters of Charity, he says in their rule, (Chap. i, No. 1), "is to honor our Lord Jesus Christ as the source and model of all charity by serving Him *corporally and spiritually* in the person of the poor."[14] "It has never been the design of God in forming your Company," he tells them, "that you take care of the body only . . .; but it is the intention of our Lord that you assist the souls of the poor sick."[15] The same purpose is expressed in the constitutions for the various conferences of charity.

St. Vincent himself determines the respective extent of the corporal and the spiritual when he says in the Common Constitution for Confraternities of Charity: ". . . corporally, by administering to them their drink and food and the necessary medicines during the time of their sicknesses; and spiritually by having the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist, and Extreme Unction administered to them, and by seeing to it that those who die depart this life well prepared and that those who recover resolve to lead a good life in the future."[16]

In some of the particular constitutions he goes into detail on this point. In that of Châtillon-les-Dombes, for example, after provision has been made for immediate relief, the lady on duty for the day is instructed to have the sick person "go to Confession in preparation for Communion on the morrow, because it is the intention of this conference that those who wish to be assisted by it go to Confession and receive Com-

[13] *Lett.*, ii., 129, No. 618, To Frère Barreau in Algiers, Dec. 4, 1648; cf. also, v.g., *Ibid.*, i., 90, No. 81, To Mlle. le Gras, (1634); *Ibid.*, ii., 538, No. 955. To a Priest of the Mission, June 4, 1653; *Ibid.*, iii., 551, No. 1459, To M. Get at Marseilles, Aug. 31, 1657.

[14] *Common Rule*, Ch. i., art. I., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 95. No. 62, Oct. 18, 1655.

[15] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 314, No. 79, Nov. 11, 1657.

[16] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 409.

munión before all else."[17] She is also told to place a crucifix in a position where the sick person can see it "in order that, casting his eyes upon it from time to time, he may consider what the Son of God has suffered for him." The same constitution says further: "They (the Ladies) shall read at times some pious book in the presence of those who are capable of deriving profit therefrom; they shall exhort them to bear their suffering patiently for the love of God and to believe that He has sent it to them for their greater good; they shall have them make an act of contrition . . . and, in case their sickness becomes worse, they shall have them go to Confession as soon as possible. And for those in grave danger of death, they shall take care to notify the parish priest that he administer to them Extreme Unction; they shall induce them to place their entire confidence in God, to think of the death and passion of our Lord Jesus, and to recommend themselves to the Blessed Virgin, the angels and the saints . . ."[18]

The Ladies of Charity who offered their services for the sick of the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris devoted much of their time from the beginning to the spiritual welfare of the patients. In his constitution for industrial training, St. Vincent again emphasizes the spiritual side of relief work by laying great stress on the spiritual training of the children. In several of his constitutions we find that the healthy poor that receive alms from the confraternity are obliged to attend the catechetical instructions given semiweekly, weekly, or biweekly, as the case may be, by the spiritual director, to attend Mass daily, and to receive the sacraments monthly.[19]

In view of the prominence given to spiritual assistance in the works of St. Vincent, the question suggests itself: What was its relation to temporal relief? Was it, as some

[17] The *Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses* (Aug. 24, 1659) wish that the sick "go to Confession the first or second day" after they begin to receive relief. Art. II., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 610.

[18] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 391-4.

[19] *Règlement de la Charité d'Hommes à Folleville*, Oct. 23, 1620; *Règlement de la Confrérie de la Charité d'Hommes et de Femmes à Courboing*, June 19, 1622; *Règlement pour une Confrérie de Charité d'Hommes et de Femmes et pour l'Organisation d'une Manufacture; Règlement de la Confrérie de la Charité de la Ville de Maçon*, 1623. *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 412-34.

interpreters of the Saint's life and works would have us believe, the prime purpose of his relief organizations, for the attainment of which corporal relief served but as the means?[20]

It is true St. Vincent says: "To labor for the salvation of the poor people of the country is the principal duty of our vocation, and all else is but accessory."[21] But he is here addressing the priests of the Mission whose main purpose is the spiritual welfare of the poor; and the accessories to which he refers are the seminaries and the exercises of the candidates for the priesthood.

More to the point are the words we find in one of his conferences to his Daughters of Charity. "Be then very solicitous," he says, "to give them (the poor) all necessary assistance, especially that which regards their salvation in order that they do not die without the sacraments."[22] As a necessary quality in one to hold an office among the Daughters of Charity, he enumerates "a great zeal for the service of fellow man and especially for the salvation of the poor."[23] "When you go to see the sick," he tells the Daughters of Charity, "(you ought) to think that it is less for their bodies that you give relief than for their souls."[24] A Daughter of Charity once told Saint Vincent the care of the poor sick did not allow her time to learn the method of giving catechetical instructions; the Saint replied: "The soul must be preferred to the body; it is necessary for the Daughters of Charity that they instruct the poor in the

[20] Abelly, iii., 138, says: "All that he has done and undertaken has been only to destroy sin and to procure that God be known, served, loved and glorified in all places by all classes of people; it was for this that he labored so much in the missions, established so many conferences and seminaries brought together so many companies." That self-sanctification might be the prime aim of his workers is excluded by the very nature of his organizations. He himself says on this point concerning his Daughters of Charity: "There is this difference between them and religious that religious have for their purpose only their own perfection, but these girls devote themselves to the salvation and relief of fellow man." *Lett.*, iv., 538, No. 2007, To M. de la Fosse, a priest of the Mission at Troyes, Feb. 7, 1660.

[21] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 29, No. 18, *Répétition d'Oraison du 25 Oct. 1643.*

[22] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 5, No. 1, July 31, 1634.

[23] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 231, No. 72, May 22, 1657.

[24] *Ibid.*, 612; *Explication des Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses*, Art. vi., Aug. 24, 1659.

things necessary for their salvation, and for this they themselves must first be instructed."[25]

But, on the other hand, we find that he and his associations of charity administer relief also when there is little or no hope or occasion of benefitting the recipient spiritually. The condition of the insane, for example, almost excluded any such hope. The extent of his relief work in the devastated provinces allowed but little opportunity for spiritual assistance to the individual victims. But little, if any, spiritual relief could be given to the hundreds that came daily to the doors of Saint-Lazare for alms during the Fronde. The Daughters of Charity, sent to the battlefields, were evidently commissioned to dress the wounds of the soldiers as their first duty.

In his instructions to the Daughters of Charity who were sent to Richelieu, St. Vincent says: "They shall try to benefit the souls while they administer to the bodies of the poor."[26] Finally, in the Particular Rules for the Sisters of the Parishes we read: "For fear lest these spiritual services be prejudicial to the corporal which they must render to the sick, as would happen if, by tarrying too long to talk to one of them, they would make the others suffer because not having their nourishment or medicines at the proper time, they shall endeavor to keep well within bounds in this respect, regulating their time and their exercises according as the number and the need of the sick is great or small. And since their duties of the afternoon are not so pressing as those of the morning, they should ordinarily employ this time to instruct and admonish them, . . . particularly while they are rendering to them the other necessary services."[27]

In the face of this evidence, we may safely conclude that, while both the corporal and the spiritual works of mercy are incumbent upon the relief workers of St. Vincent in virtue of their respective rules, the prime object of these organizations and the first duty of their members was material aid. But the workers were to keep the spiritual welfare of their

[25] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 572, No. 99, *Explication des Règles Communes (suite)*, Dec. 8, 1658.

[26] *Lett.*, i., 368, No. 324, To Mlle. le Gras.

[27] Art. vii., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 612-3.

patients ever in mind and administer to it simultaneously with material relief in as far as they could do so without prejudice to bodily assistance and without overtaxing the condition of the sick.

In conclusion, we may ask whether or not the supernatural had a decidedly salutary influence on the social activities of St. Vincent and his co-workers. We are compelled to answer in the affirmative. But let us first permit St. Vincent to give expression to his own convictions.

"Receive Holy Communion frequently," he once told Mlle. le Gras. "The Holy Eucharist is the oracle of charitable thoughts."[28] He was often heard to say that nothing great can be expected from one who does not love prayer, but, on the other hand, he says: "Give me a man of prayer and he will be capable of all things."[29] "It is impossible for a Daughter of Charity to persevere in her vocation," he says in one of his conferences, "unless she prays. . . . Failing to partake of this refreshment, she will find her employment too disagreeable; she will become disgusted with her state and finally give it up entirely."[30] A Sister who is careless in her prayers, he says in the course of the same conference, shows it, among other ways, by her lack of cordiality and affability towards the sick. "In order that they may correspond worthily to a vocation so holy and imitate an exemplar so perfect (i. e., Christ)," we read in the rule of the Daughters of Charity, "they must endeavor to live holily and work with great care for their own perfection."[31] He recommends personal sanctification to the Ladies of Charity as the first means of success in their vast undertakings.[32] These citations suffice to indicate St. Vin-

[28] Abelly, i., 158, n. 3.

[29] *Ibid.*, 80.

[30] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 360, No. 32, May 31, 1648. Florence Nightingale (English Nurse, 1820-1910) was of the same conviction. She writes: "I do entirely and constantly believe that the religious motive is essential for the highest kind of nurse. There are such disappointments, such sickenings of the heart, that they can only be borne by the feeling that one is called to the work by God, that it is a part of His work, that one is a fellow worker with God." Cook, *Life of Florence Nightingale*, ii., 271.

[31] Chap. i., art. 1, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 95, No. 62, *Explication des Règles Communes*, Oct. 18, 1655.

[32] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 211, No. 6, July 11, 1657.

cent's conviction that the supernatural had a direct and beneficial influence on the efficiency of men and women engaged in the service of the needy.

Moreover, the faith that impelled St. Vincent to say that ecclesiastics who know the need of the people and still remain idle are "guilty of the Blood of the Son of God,"[33] or, "I have fear of being damned myself for not being constantly occupied with the instruction of the poor people,"[34] must have encouraged and spurred him on where human and natural motives were powerless. The conviction that the poor are "our lords and masters," that what we do for them we do for Christ and shall be rewarded accordingly, or that a life of charity is a sublime and divine calling, evidently influenced the attitude of St. Vincent and his workers towards the poor. It undoubtedly served as a powerful incentive to give the poor and sick a more loving and more efficient care and service. St. Vincent himself says: "I ought not consider a poor peasant or a poor woman according to their exterior nor according to the degree of their intelligence, since very often they scarcely have the figure or the intelligence of reasonable persons; they are so rude and earthly. But turn the medal and you will see by the light of faith that the Son of God, who wished to be poor, is represented to us by the poor. . . . O God, how delightful to behold the poor if we consider them in God and in the esteem in which Jesus Christ has placed them! But if we regard them according to the sentiments of the flesh and of the earthly mind, they will appear contemptible."[35]

2. *Free Service*

All the works of St. Vincent de Paul were organized to meet the demands of some particular spiritual or temporal need. And St. Vincent was solicitous that none, standing in need of the aid thus proffered, should be deterred for financial reasons from asking and receiving it. Hence we find that in almost every field in which he labored, his services and those of his coworkers were rendered gratis.

[33] *Lett.*, i., 78, No. 65, July 9, 1633.
[34] *Lett.*, i., 43, No. 30, To M. du Coudray at Rome, Sept. 4, 1631
[35] Abelly, iii., 17.

Charges were made, however, in some phases of his work. Thus a moderate sum was demanded from the students at some of the seminaries. He instructs one of the brethren at le Mans to render an itemized account of the current expenses of the seminary there, in order that the bill for each student be determined. "It is not expedient," he adds, "that the house, being in straits as it is, should furnish the board of these young men."[36] He tells the superior at Nôtre-Dame-de-Lorm to be satisfied with the 100 or 120 livres board as the bishop desires, if it be sufficient; but if not, "represent to him humbly," he says, "that this does not suffice in view of the cost of living and the little revenue you have."[37] During the Fronde when he was hard pressed for alms, he instructed the confrère at Marseilles to "dismiss without hesitation all our seminarians who do not pay a sufficient board."[38]

Charges were also made in some places for the board of the candidates for ordinations during their spiritual retreats. At Annecy, for example, they were asked to pay a florin per day.[39] At Rome the exercises were at first given free of charge. Later the brethren were permitted to accept donations from the candidates, though preferably they were not to do so if the means of the house permitted. Still a few years later, on account of the poverty of the establishment, the retreatants were expected to pay a nominal sum. Finally, in other places the exercises were given gratis throughout. This was especially true of Saint-Lazare, where the board and lodging of the many retreatants throughout the year meant no small expense to the house.[40]

[36] *Lett.*, ii., 262, No. 729, To M. Gentil, Aug. 16, 1650.

[37] *Lett.*, iv., 527, No. 1997, To M. Barry, Jan. 4, 1660.

[38] *Lett.*, ii., 146, No. 635, To M. Portail, Jan. 22, 1649; cf. *Ibid.*, 157, No. 644, Mar. 4, 1649. St. Vincent also received remuneration for the care of the insane and delinquents at Saint-Lazare, but it is not evident from the context whether it was requested as pay or merely accepted as voluntary offerings. *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 188-9, No. 61, Mar. 16, 1656.

[39] *Lett.*, i., 330, No. 299, To M. Codoing at Annecy, July 26, 1640.

[40] *Lett.*, i., 414, No. 359, To M. Codoing, Supr. at Rome, July 17, 1642; *Ibid.*, iii., 218, No. 1180, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome, Dec. 17, 1655; *Ibid.*, iv., 144, No. 1695, Sept. 6, 1658.—The development of the situation at Rome seems to be fairly expressive of St. Vincent's mind; he demanded payment only when the financial condition of the house required it.

It is interesting to note that on one occasion St. Vincent not only lodged free of charge the poor workers who wished to make a spiritual retreat at St. Lazare, but that he even paid the value of their work to their employers for the time thus spent.[41]

He insisted very emphatically that the priests of his Congregation should not receive payment for the instructions and missions they gave. As late as 1657, he wrote to one of his confrères: "I beg you once for all never to give missions except at the expense of our house."[42] He once obliged a confrère to restore thirteen livres he had received in violation of this precept. He was so careful in this respect that he would not allow his brethren to accept even an alms if there was probability of its being considered as pay for their services.[43]

The social workers of St. Vincent, far from receiving payment from their charges, were not even to accept presents from them. In the constitution for the Daughters of Charity at the Hôtel-Dieu of Angers it is expressly stated the Sister "shall neither receive nor give any present."[44] Vincent is still more explicit on this point in the Particular Regulations for the Sisters of the Parishes. He says: "They shall receive no present, however small it be, from the poor whom they assist, and they shall be well on their guard not to think that they [the poor] are under obligations to them for the services they render them; but on the contrary, they [the Sisters] ought to be convinced that they are very much indebted to them [the poor], since for a little alms which they give them, not of their own goods, but only of a little of their attentions, they make friends for themselves who have the right to give them one day entrance into heaven; and even in this life, they receive, because of them, greater honor

[41] Abelly, ii., 350, n. 1.

[42] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 124, No. 3103, Jan. 13, 1657.

[43] *Lett.*, i., 39, No. 26, To M. du Coudray at Rome, Aug. 1631; *Ibid.*, 53 No. 40, To M. de la Salle, Nov. 11, 1631; *Ibid.*, 254, No. 244, To Mme. de Chantal, July 14, 1639; *Ibid.*, ii., 317, No. 779, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Richelieu, Mar. 15, 1651; *Ibid.*, iii., 392, No. 1321, To M. Cruoly, Supr. at le Mans, Dec. 23, 1656; *Ibid.*, iv., 265, No. 1783, To M. Rivet, Supr. at Saintes, Jan. 5, 1659; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 554, No. 116, Sept. 8, 1659.

[44] *Lett.*, i., 304, No. 286, May, 1640.

and more true contentment than they would ever have dared hope for in the world. . . ."[45]

3. *Personal Service*

Personal service was the keynote of all St. Vincent's efforts in the field of charity. The women of the confraternities all had their day of serving the poor sick, beginning with the president and following in the order of their admission into the association. Each in her turn was obliged to prepare the food, carry it to the poor, and serve it. The Ladies of Paris were organized on the same plan of personal service. They went in person to instruct and serve the poor of the Hôtel-Dieu and to visit and assist the poor sick in their homes. And even after they discontinued this latter phase of their work, they ever remained in personal touch with the needy, studying in person the particular wants of the works and the institutions to which they rendered financial aid. The Daughters of Charity were organized preëminently to serve the sick and poor in person.

Personal service, to the mind of St. Vincent, not only proved to be the most successful in actual experience, but was of such importance as to be essential to the continued existence of the confraternities. He writes thus to Mlle. le Gras: "The proposition to nourish the sick each in your turn, at your expense, seems to me proper and is being done elsewhere since the day of the erection of the confraternity. . . . If you take away the duty of cooking meat from each (member) of the confraternity now, never again will you be able to restore it to them; and to have it cooked elsewhere, if someone undertakes to do it out of charity at present, will be a burden to her within a short time; and if you have it prepared for pay, it will cost much; then in the course of some time the Ladies of Charity will say that it is necessary to have the pot [of meat] brought to the sick by the woman who will prepare it, and in this way your confraternity will come to fail."[46]

One of the principal points on which Mlle. le Gras was

[45] Art. XII., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 617.
[46] *Lett.*, i., 153.

instructed by St. Vincent to insist when visiting the various confraternities, was "to try to persuade" the members "to go in person to visit the sick as much as possible."[47]

St. Vincent says again that "it is to be feared that, if one distributes money to them (the poor sick), the Ladies will be content after doing that."[48] It is evident from this statement that the giving of money alone did not, according to St. Vincent, satisfy the obligations of charity. He demanded personal contact with the poor and sick.

The plan of one of St. Vincent's conferences on visiting the sick in person is preserved to us. We shall give the gist of it here in conclusion.

The first point deals with its importance. He proceeds negatively. In the first place, he says one who does not visit the sick in person "deprives our Lord of the glory He receives on earth from visiting the sick. This glory consists: 1. in the obedience one renders Him [by visiting the sick]; 2. in this that He manifests His goodness to the poor through ours; 3. in this that the poor learn to know and love Him more in consequence." Secondly, he says, such a person deprives himself "1. of the blessing [of God] on his goods; 2. of the graces God attaches to the visiting of the poor; 3. he puts himself in danger of losing [eternal] glory," for "God takes it equally away from both those who have received some talent in vain" [and such are those who fail to visit the sick] "and from those who have sinned mortally." Thirdly, such a one "deprives the poor of the consolation one brings to them by visiting them; . . . of the knowledge of God and of His love," whom the poor would learn to know through the visitor. "And it can happen," so the document continues, "that being deprived of the consolation of the instruction you would give them, they shall be deprived of paradise."

According to St. Vincent, therefore, "to visit the sick" in person, besides giving glory to God, and bringing blessings to the visitor and consolation to those visited, is a Christian obligation. It has been commanded by Christ.

[47] *Ibid.*, 154, No. 152, To Mlle. le Gras at Villepreux, (1636); *Ibid.*, 64, No. 50, To Mlle. le Gras at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, July 10, 1632.

[48] *Ibid.*, 35, No. 21, To Mlle. le Gras, Feb. 24, 1631.

One who fails to do so when he can, runs the danger of losing eternal glory and, at times, is indirectly responsible for the salvation of the sick and poor.

The second point of this conference treats of the spirit with which one should be animated when visiting the poor. In the first place, St. Vincent applies the "Golden Rule" and says you should "visit them in the spirit in which you would desire that one visited you if you were in their place." Secondly, he says, you should "visit them with the faith with which you would visit our Lord, which is the spirit in which St. Louis often visited the poor."

In the third part of the conference St. Vincent enumerates the means which keep this spirit alive and which enable one to make the visits in a befitting Christian manner. He enumerates the following four: "1. It is necessary to ask the grace of God; 2. to retire at an early hour the evening before and devote some time to good reading; 3. to make one's meditation in the morning on the contents of this reading, then to assist at Mass; 4. to keep oneself more recollected on this day" [the day of special service assigned by the constitution of the confraternity].[49]

This is all of the conference that has come down to us, but it is sufficient to show that St. Vincent not only urged the obligation of keeping in touch with the poor by visiting them in person, but also insisted that it be done in a manner well worthy of a Christian and not as a matter of business or routine.

[49] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 229-30.

CHAPTER II

Organized Charity

The necessity of organization in relief work was strikingly brought home to St. Vincent in the early years of his charitable activity. In the autumn of 1617, St. Vincent was parish priest at Châtillon-les-Dombes, a little town of the present diocese of Belley in eastern France. At the Sunday Mass he had recommended a family, striken alike with poverty and sickness, to the charity of his parishioners. They responded most generously. St. Vincent, however, upon visiting the family in the course of the afternoon, was forced to exclaim: "Behold the great charity that they practice. But it is not well regulated. These poor people are provided with too much at a time; a part of it will spoil and perish, and then they will relapse into their former necessity."

This consideration immediately suggested organization to St. Vincent's practical mind. He accordingly induced a number of the pious women of the parish to band together for the purpose of providing the needful each day for this one family as well as for such others as might require their assistance in the future. After a successful trial of three months, he gave the association a permanent constitution.[1]

This initial experience taught St. Vincent, on the one hand, the necessity of organization in the field of relief and, on the other, the possibilities of systematic effort. He was quick to learn the lesson. From this time until his death, a space of forty-three years, he was engaged in organized charity.

St. Vincent expresses his mind on the relative value and necessity of organized charity in the constitution of the association at Châtillon-les-Dombes. The poor of this city,

[1] *Conférences aux Filles de la Charité*, i., 208-9, No. 21, Feb. 13, 1646; *Lettres et Conférences de S. Vincent de Paul (Supplément)*, 385-402.

he says in the preamble of this document, "have at times suffered much rather in default of order in relieving them than [for want] of charitable persons."[2] According to this statement, therefore, both alms and order in distributing them are essential elements in the giving of relief. The absence of the latter, no less than of the former, can frustrate the purposes of charity. Moreover, his entire career of charity manifests his conviction of the impossibility of founding anything durable and effective without rules and regulations extending at times to the minutest details.

1. *Organization in Social Service*

We shall ascertain the nature of St. Vincent's organizations by centering our attention especially on the various constitutions, which he drafted for the different conferences, or confraternities, of charity. These conferences were strictly lay associations.

Each confraternity was a separate, independent unit, circumscribed ordinarily by the limits of the parish where it was established. St. Vincent, however, was not opposed on principle to having the associations overlap, as, for example, at Beauvais where the members of one confraternity assisted at the burial of the poor who had been under the care of another confraternity,[3] or even to having one confraternity for the entire city, or for the city and its dependent villages, irrespective of parish limits.[4] As late as 1656, he instructed two Sisters on their departure for Arras to establish either one general confraternity for the city, or one in each parish, according to the wishes of the authorities there. He advised the latter plan, however, stating that it had succeeded at Beauvais after the former had failed.[5]

The work was under strict ecclesiastical supervision. It was subject to the approval and good pleasure of the respective bishops and to the direction and general supervision

[2] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 388.
[3] *Lett.*, i., 33, No. 19, To Mlle. le Gras at Beauvais, Dec. 7, 1630.
[4] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 427.
[5] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 189, No. 68, Aug. 30, 1656.

of the local parish priest or his vicar.[6] If, however, the parish priest was non-resident, or either he or his vicar did not take sufficient interest in the work, the constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes [Nov. 24, 1617], made it permissible for the confraternity to choose another priest, approved by the archbishop, as director of the work and spiritual moderator of the members. A later constitution [Montmirail, 1618], gave much more prominence to the duties of the parish priest or director.[7] He was placed in direct touch with the sick poor and made to participate in the activities of the confraternity. He was commissioned to see to the exact observance of the rules regarding the care of the sick. These could be admitted to the care of the confraternity or dismissed only after consulting him. He could admit the sick but only after consulting the president or the first assistant. He was asked to visit the sick in person every two days if possible. He was also instructed to supervise, or if necessary to have complete control of, the treasury.[8]

Apart from this, the organization was very democratic. The members elected their officers from their midst. The usual officers were a president and her two assistants,[9] elected for six months, or one, two, or three years. They could, however, be deposed at any time for mismanagement, by the vote of the members.[10]

St. Vincent was well aware of the influence of the officers on an organization. He says in one of his conferences: "The entire well-being of companies, both of men and of women, depends on the officers when they fulfil their duties faith-

[6] *Lett.*, i., 32, 33, No. 19, To Mlle. le Gras at Beauvais, Dec. 7, 1630; *Ibid.*, 35, No. 21, To Mlle. le Gras, Feb. 24, 1631; *Ibid.*, 236, No. 231, to Mlle. le Gras (1639).

[7] So little prominence is given to the parish priest in the constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes, owing, no doubt, to the fact that St. Vincent himself was the parish priest in question.

[8] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 403-4; *Lett.*, i., 153, To Mlle. le Gras, Oct. 31, 1636.

[9] They are called by different names in the various constitutions, *e.g.*, *prieure, sous-prieure, trésorière; supérieure, trésorière, garde-meuble; prieure, trésorière, assistante. Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 384, 389, 390, 397.

[10] *Ibid.*, 384, 397, 409; Coste, 100. One constitution (*Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 384) prescribes that the first officers be appointed by the parish priest and thereafter elected every six months by the members. The twelve assistants of the men's confraternity were elected for life (*Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 413).

fully. On the contrary, everything becomes disorderly when they neglect things, wish to govern otherwise than they should, and follow their own whims.[11]

According to the constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes, the president was in direct charge of the work. It was her duty to see that the poor were cared for according to the regulations of the confraternity and, during the interval between the monthly meeting, to admit to the benefits of the association the sick who were truly poor, and to dismiss those who had recovered. She was ordinarily obliged to consult her two assisting officers, or, at least one of them, before acting in these matters. Still, without their advice, she was empowered to order the treasurer to give out whatever she judged necessary for the things demanding attention before the next meeting.[12]

Later constitutions make some modifications in the duties of the president.[13] One of them obliges her to consult also the spiritual director before receiving or dismissing a patient and to visit the sick in person every three days; also to summon "the physician, apothecary, surgeon" for the sick when necessary, to have collections taken up in the parish on Sundays and feast days and to give her orders to the treasurer in writing for expenses exceeding five sous. In another constitution the president is commissioned "to receive the sick after the physician has visited them, and to give a certificate that she has found out that they are poor, resident in the parish for three months, and not afflicted with a contagious disease." She is instructed to visit them once a week, if possible.[14]

The two assistants were to act in the capacity of advisers to the president and, with her, look after the welfare of the poor and the maintenance of the association. One of them was charged with the duties usually incumbent upon a vice president and a treasurer. She was to fulfil the

[11] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 196, No. 4, Aug. 27, 1660.

[12] *Ibid.*, 390.

[13] These modifications undoubtedly register the results of experience; St. Vincent is seeking to strengthen the weak points and remedy the defects of his first set of rules in the light of experience.

[14] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 384, 405.

functions of the president in the latter's absence, to be entrusted with the money, to have charge of the linens and the other commodities destined for the use of the poor sick, to purchase and keep in custody the provisions necessary for the assistance of the poor, to give what was required to the lady whose turn it was to serve the sick poor, to wash the linens of the sick, to execute the orders of the president and to keep an exact account of all the receipts and expenses of the confraternity.[15]

Later constitutions divide these duties between the two assistants. One assigns to the first assistant or treasurer the duty of receiving, guarding, and spending the funds of the confraternity and of paying the legacies made to the confraternity. She can incur no expense without the advice of the president, and must render an account to the members monthly and also at the end of her term of office. Another constitution allows her to spend "below five sous" per month[16] for the necessities of the poor without the president's consent. She is instructed to have one book in which she records the receipts and another for the expenditures. She is to be present with her book of receipts when the poor boxes are opened and record the amount of money found there. She must render an annual account. She is to guard the "papers and title deeds" in a special safe having a double lock; she keeps one key, the president the other. She shall, with the good pleasure of the president, have on hand and distribute to the sick such provisions "as sweetmeats, barley, prunes"; she shall also keep a number of chickens to furnish fresh eggs for the sick. A third constitution demands that she have a double lock also on the money safe[17] and that she render her account at the end of her office "to the newly elected officers and to the other persons of the confraternity in the presence of the parish priest and the

[15] *Ibid.*, 390.

[16] Most of the constitutions permit the treasurer the expenditure of a specified small amount for the relief of emergency cases without the president's permission.

[17] *Ibid.*, 384, 406, 410, 422. The same precautions are taken in the confraternities for men (*Ibid.*, 414, 419). One constitution for men demands that there be even three different keys, one in the hands of each of the superior officers (*Lett.*, i., 20).

people of the parish who wish to be present."[18] The constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes, as also a later one, demands that the report of the treasurer be accepted without question.[19]

The other assistant is entrusted by these later constitutions with the safe-keeping of the utensils and commodities of the association of which she shall keep an inventory. She is to take note of the utensils which she lends to the sick, and also of the name and residence of the latter. She shall make a collection of linens with the treasurer, or first assistant, once during her term of office, and shall render an account at the end of eighteen months. Another constitution commissions her to wash and mend the linens of the confraternity.[20]

A fourth officer common to the associations of women was the bursar, or procurator. This office owes its existence to the fact that St. Vincent did not think it proper that the women alone should have the management of the temporal foundations which he foresaw would be made in favor of the confraternity. The constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes demands that the incumbent be a pious ecclesiastic or virtuous layman of the town who was well disposed toward the poor and not too much absorbed in temporal affairs. He was to enjoy all the privileges of membership while in office. The duration of his office depended entirely on the good pleasure of the confraternity.[21]

The same constitution assigns to him the following duties: to manage the temporal foundations of the association with the advice of the spiritual director and the other three

[18] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 410. According to the constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes, the châtelain of the city, and the rector and one of the syndics of the hospital are to be invited. Through them the members of the city council may be kept informed of the management of the temporal affairs of the association. In case of maladministration, these in turn are requested to report the matter to the archbishop for correction. *Ibid.*, 390, 396. The final draft of the constitutions for the Ladies of Charity of the Court, on the contrary, demands that the treasurer make her annual report to the members only. Art. 4, Coste, 102.

[19] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 396, 423.

[20] *Ibid.,* 384-5, 407, 423.

[21] *Ibid.,* 389, 397. The constitutions for the conference at Courboing [June 19, 1622] limited his election to the choice of the officers and restricted his term of office to two years. *Ibid.,* 423.

officers, to render an account of the state of his affairs when called upon to do so, to record the resolutions taken at the meetings, and to invite, on the part of the confraternity, the châtelain of the town and the rector of the hospital with one of the syndics to assist at the rendering of accounts. He was also to act as the conference's sacristan.

Another constitution extends his duties. He is instructed to keep a list of the collections made at the church and from house to house and of the donations of individuals; to give the receipts, and to draw up the accounts of the treasurer if necessary. He is also to act as general secretary of the confraternity. This implied that he copy the constitution of the confraternity and the act of establishment into his book, as also the names of the members, the day of their reception and decease, the elections of officers, the accounts rendered, the names of the sick assisted by the confraternity, the day of their reception and of their recovery or death, and in general everything of interest and importance.[22]

The constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes makes provision also for two "guards of the poor sick." These are to be poor and virtuous women, not members of the confraternity, chosen by the ladies. They are to enjoy all the privileges of membership except the right of voting. It is their duty to remain with the sick who are alone and bedridden, and nurse them according to the orders of the president. The regulations for the conference at Courboing charge them with the further duty of notifying the Ladies of Charity of special meetings and admit them to unrestricted membership.[23]

Membership was open to women of all states of life—married, widowed, and single. The sole requisites in the applicant were true virtue and piety, a founded hope of their persevering in the work, and, if married, or single and living at home, the consent of husband or parents. To forestall the confusion that might result from overmembership, the constitutions of Châtillon-les-Dombes limited the number

[22] *Ibid.*, 410.
[23] *Ibid.*, 389, 424.

provisionally to twenty.[24] It also made the members liable to expulsion, after due warnings, for a public sin or for grave carelessness or neglect in the care of the poor.

The members of the association were to serve the sick successively, one each day, beginning with the president and the others following in the order of their reception into the confraternity.

Such was St. Vincent's organization for visiting nursing. It has been chosen here to exemplify his principles in organization because it was, on the one hand, the most universally spread and the most successful of his lay organizations and on the other, it served as the groundwork for other associations and underwent but slight modifications when adapted to a different type of membership and a different purpose.

It was characteristic of St. Vincent not to insist on any special, rigid form of organization. He always adhered to the general outline, but allowed many of the minor details to be determined by local conditions. And, though he insisted on the strict and uniform observance of the rules when once established, he was ever ready to make an exception to satisfy the demands of charity in accordance with his own principle that "the duty of charity is above all rule."[25] For example, he praised Mlle. le Gras in one of his letters to her for accommodating the constitution of a conference to the circumstances.[26] On another occasion he sent her a set of rules with the instructions to change whatever was necessary or useful in the light of local conditions.[27] And many are the instances on record where he made an exception to the rule of the Daughters of Charity and of the priests in order to meet special needs. It was, in short, just this faculty of adaptability that enabled St. Vincent with his bands of workers to undertake tasks so varied and to

[24] *Ibid.*, 389. For the same reason also a later constitution restricts the membership of both men and women "to a certain number" (*Ibid.*, 428). St. Vincent thinks it advisable to reduce the number of members at Montreuil to sixty (*Lett.*, i., 38, No. 24, To Mlle. le Gras at Montreuil, May 31, 1631). A *règlement général* specifies that the membership shall consist of "a certain and limited number" (*Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 409).

[25] *Lett.*, iii., 320, No. 1263, To a Daughter of Charity at Richelieu, July 26, 1656.

[26] *Lett.*, ii., 69, No. 580 (1648).

[27] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 25, No. 3007, To Mlle. le Gras (1639).

enter fields so diversified as to afford relief to all forms of human misery.

2. *Meetings*

"Frequent communication with one another, to tell one another all,—there is nothing more necessary. This unites the hearts and God blesses the counsel one takes so that things go better." In these words of St. Vincent to his Daughters of Charity he epitomizes his teaching on the utility and necessity of frequent meetings, formal and informal, for the purpose of exchanging views and discussing difficulties.[28] In all his constitutions he makes provisions to this effect.

Ordinarily a monthly meeting was demanded. It was held on the first or third Sunday of the month in the special chapel destined for the use of the confraternity, or in a chapel of the church or in that of the hospital. On the morning of the meeting day, or on the following day, a low Mass was said for the confraternity at eight o'clock, or at an hour agreed upon by the members. The members were admonished to attend this Mass in a body and to receive the sacraments.[29]

The meeting proper was held at one o'clock, or "after Vespers," or at a convenient hour of the afternoon, but not while services were being conducted in the parish churches. The meeting was opened with the singing of the Litany of our Lord, or of the Blessed Virgin. Thereupon the parish priest or his vicar, i. e., the director of the confraternity, gave a "brief exhortation." One constitution inverts this order. The subject of the exhortation was to make "for the spiritual advancement of the entire company and for the conservation and progress of the confraternity," or, as another constitution expresses it, it was "to impress in their

[28] *Ibid.*, 307-8, No. 3, *Conseil du 19 Juin 1647*. This bent of mind on the part of St. Vincent did not arise solely from his conviction of the practical value of such meetings. It had its deeper root in his character. We have seen how he himself always acted with the advice of others and demanded the same humility of judgment in those under his direction.

[29] *Ibid.*, 394-5, 403, 411, 414-5, 420, 425, 431-2. One constitution prescribes that the women take turns, one each meeting day, in furnishing the flowers for the adornment of the altar (*Ibid.*, 403).

hearts the spirit of true and solid devotion." Some time was devoted to the reading of the rules of the confraternity, or the reading of the rules could replace the exhortation. The members were admonished to call one another's attention to faults committed in the service of the poor.[30]

According to the constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes, the director proposed questions that made for the well-being of the sick poor. These points were discussed by all the members and results were arrived at by the plurality vote of all present. Other constitutions restrict this discussion of practical points to the officers. The constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes allows but one-half hour for the reading of the rules, mutual correction of faults, and the discussion of practical points.[31]

The same constitution also contains the practical admonition that the entire meeting be conducted "without noise or confusion and with as few words as possible." The constitution for the men's confraternity prescribes that, after the vote has been taken and announced on any point, all further discussion must cease.[32] The Ladies of Charity of the Royal Court are admonished never to interrupt the speaker, to express their opinions succinctly, and to exclude irrelevant matters from their meetings, notably affairs of state and personal interests.[33]

The peculiar organization of this latter confraternity affected also the nature of its meetings. Three of the Ladies were assigned to each of several departments or fields of work. Each division first met and discussed its own affairs

[30] *Ibid.*, 395, 403, 414-5, 425, 432. We know from St. Vincent's conferences to his Daughters of Charity that he laid great stress on the frequent reading of the rules as a means of stimulating interest and enthusiasm (*v.g., Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 63). A constitution for the union of a conference of charity with a confraternity of the Holy Name, contains the following article: "And in order that each member of the conference may better know what he is obliged to do, the present constitution shall be read aloud in church after Vespers by the pastor, or by another appointed by him, on the first Sunday of each month during the first year and thereafter once a year on the feast day of the said conference" (*Lett.*, i., 20, No. 7, April 11, 1627).

[31] *Ibid.*, 395, 403, 414-5, 432. The constitution for the men's branch of the confraternity at Folleville provides that the officers meet oftener than once a month, if it be expedient. *Ibid.*, 414.

[32] *Ibid.*, 395, 414, 432.

[33] Coste, 105, Art. 12-3; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 476.

and difficulties, and brought only the more important matters before the general monthly meetings.[34]

Incidental remarks of St. Vincent touching the importance of meetings are also well worth recalling. They go to show that he was not satisfied with one meeting a month. In one of his letters he proposes as a model the Ladies of Rheims "who assemble every week" to discuss the affairs of the poor.[35] During the devastation of the provinces the Ladies of Charity at Paris held a meeting weekly, and during the Fronde they met even daily, to place the alms in the hands of the treasurer, to report the more urgent needs and discuss the remedies.[36] He tells his brethren to confer with one another every day, and he heartily approves of the idea that his Daughters of Charity spend about half an hour each day relating what they have done and the difficulties they have encountered, and considering their coming duties.[37]

Finally, we may quote the words of St. Vincent which we find in the outline of a conference to the Ladies of Charity. He says: The members ". . . ought to be glad to assist at the meetings because they learn to know one another better, and, as many burning coals give out more heat and light, so, too, many Ladies of Charity, selected and assembled occasionally, inflame one another with the love of God; 3. because it is a means of remedying difficulties which face the Company and thus of consolidating it and, in consequence, of making it subsist; 4. in order that they be informed of all that takes place and of the difficulties that could happen to any one, and that they enlighten those who might have any reason to complain."[38]

[34] *Lett. et Coufér. (Suppl.)*, 475-6. Days apart from the monthly meetings were assigned for the elections, rendering of accounts, and the like.

[35] *Lett.*, iii., 260, No. 1219, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, April 13, 1656. And, as a matter of fact, the final constitution for the Ladies of Charity at Paris drafted by St. Vincent in 1660, demands a weekly meeting. Coste, 104.

[36] *Lett.*, ii., 429, No. 871, To M. Vageot, Supr. at Saintes, May 22, 1652; *Ibid.*, iii., 323, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656; *cf.* also letters to Frère Jean Parre; *Lett.*, iii., pp. 563, 628, 639; *Lett.*, iv., 233, 236, 245.

[37] *Lett.*, i., 188, No. 184, To M. Lambert at Richelieu, Jan. 30, 1638; *Lett. et Coufér. (Suppl.)*, 307.

[38] *Projét de Coufér. aux Dames de la Char., Lett. et Coufér. (Suppl.)*, 226; *cf.* also *Plan d'entretien sur les raisons de se réunir de temps à autre.* Coste, 114-6; Idem, 136.

3. *Co-operation*

St. Vincent showed great interest in all the religious and charitable movements of his time, and was ever ready to lend his personal aid to promote them. We know, too, that he insisted on mutual coöperation, on union and harmony of thought and effort, among his workers for the attainment of the purpose of their respective institutions. He was likewise very solicitous to gain the good will and retain the favor of the bishops and the pastors and the socially and politically prominent in order that they might actually assist, or, at least, not hamper, him in his work.[39]

We also find systematic coöperation between his Ladies of Charity at Paris and the religious of the Hôtel-Dieu in the care of the poor sick. Before associating himself with this work, St. Vincent first talked with the temporal and spiritual administrators of the hospital. He wished thereby to forestall misinterpretations of the Ladies' intentions, since in reality their proffered services implied an indictment of the hospital administration.

The Ladies began by visiting the sick in groups of four. They presented themselves to the religious in charge and offered to assist them. "We pretend to contribute to the salvation and the relief of the poor, but this is impossible without the aid and consent of these good religious who govern them"—this was the conviction that dictated St. Vincent's instructions to the Ladies. He told them "to esteem and honor the religious as visible angels, addressing them

[39] For example, he does not wish the Superior at Sedan to be commissioned to communicate the prohibition to preach to a certain ecclesiastic, because "this young man has prominent relatives at Sedan who would take this prohibition ill . . ."; moreover, "the governor would be displeased that you did it without speaking to him of it." (*Lett.*, ii., 403, No. 853, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, Mar. 23, 1652). He postpones the appointment of a new superior at Sedan in order not to offend the governor and says: "You know the trouble we have taken to satisfy him on this point and the changes we have had to make to retain his good pleasure, without which the Company could accomplish nothing or but little" (*Ibid.*, 356, No. 816, To M. Dufour, Confrère at Sedan, Oct. 7, 1651). The superior at Toul neglects to acknowledge the receipt of an alms from Mme. de Herse, a rich and noble lady of Paris; St. Vincent writes him a letter urging him to make due acknowledgment at once and proffer his excuses, for, he says, "she is a benefactress of our Company and one of the most eminent; and for this reason we ought to comply with her wishes and strive to satisfy her. . . ." (*Ibid.*, iii., 710, No. 1578, To M. Desjardins, Supr. at Toul, Dec. 29, 1657).

with meekness and humility and showing them all deference." If their services were not always accepted with good will on the part of the religious, they should "make excuses and endeavor to enter their sentiments without ever contradicting or grieving them or wishing to dominate over them." In consequence of this friendly and respectful approach, the Ladies soon had full "liberty to go from room to room and from bed to bed, to console the poor sick, to speak to them of God, and to urge them to make good use of their infirmities."[40]

They soon added bodily relief to their charitable ministrations. They began by bringing little delicacies to the sick by way of refreshment between dinner and supper. Shortly after, they rented a room near the Hôtel-Dieu where the sweetmeats were kept and prepared. The Daughters of Charity were engaged to take charge of the purchasing and preparing of the necessary things and to assist the Ladies in the distribution. More substantial food was then added. As the work progressed, some of the Ladies were assigned to the instruction of the poor, others to corporal relief.

The coöperation went further. With the permission of the superiors, the Ladies engaged two, and later six, priests for the instruction of the men and for the Confessions of all. The Ladies paid them for their services.

This is the only phase of St. Vincent's work where we have clear evidence of defined, systematic coöperation between his organizations and other charitable agencies, or even between one of his organizations and another.

The relief programme of Mâcon was rather the expression of united effort on the part of the people, the clergy, and the civil authorities, to rid the city of the menacing poor, than systematic coöperation among independent bodies. We know that the confraternity of Châtillon-les-Dombes was on friendly terms with the hospital of the town since it enjoyed the liberty of holding its monthly meetings in the chapel of the hospital. Moreover, "one of the syndics and the rector of the hospital" were invited to be present when the treasurer rendered her annual account and the

[40] Abelly, i., 198-9.

hospital was expected to furnish the shroud and have the grave dug for those who died while under the care of the confraternity.[41] And again, two constitutions provide that the confraternity receive part of "the annual revenue of the hospital."[42] We learn also from a letter of St. Vincent that exceptionally the sick at Quinze-Vingts were admitted to the care of the confraternity by the administrators of the hospital.[43] Furthermore, the missioners made agreements with the administrators of the hospitals in the provincial towns to accept "a certain number of sick in payment of six or seven sous per day each."[44] But in all these cases the records fail to give us further details as to the exact relations between the two respective institutions.

There was evidently a conscious endeavor on the part of the conferences to supplement the work of the hospitals,[45] but the evidence on hand warrants no conclusion concerning systematic coöperation. Certain of the city officials, too, could assist at the rendering of accounts, but here again we have no information that the civil authorities really cooperated with the conferences. The same is true of the city authorities in the provinces during the wars, of the consuls of the Barbary States, as also of the religious[46] who were already working among the Christian slaves when St. Vincent's workers entered the field. The records furnish only a few general statements.[47]

[41] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 391, 394.

[42] *Ibid.*, 432, 418.

[43] *Lett.*, i., 312, No. 289, To Mlle. le Gras (1640).

[44] Abelly, ii., 522.

[45] *Cf., v.g.*, Abelly, i., 162.

[46] Order of the Holy Trinity (Mathurins) founded by John of Matha and Felix of Valois in 1198; Order of the Brothers of Mercy, founded by Peter Nolascus in 1223.

[47] *V.g.*, in a letter of St. Vincent we find the statement that "the king gives 45,000 livres for this purpose [to assist the poor religious of both sexes] to be distributed monthly [by the congregation] according to the order of the superintendent of justice." *Lett.*, i., 334, No. 299, To M. Codoing at Annecy, July 26, 1640; *cf.* also *Ibid.*, 319, No. 295, To M. Du Coudray, July 10, 1640. Concerning the relations between the members of St. Vincent's Congregation and the consuls, Abelly (ii., 128, 130) says, "they aided one another mutually with great unity and harmony." Concerning the religious St. Vincent writes, *v.g.*: "You need expect nothing of the Fathers of Mercy, nor of the Mathurins, though these latter give us reason to hope for more help than the former, and to them we try to accommodate ourselves." *Lett.*, ii., 20, No. 538, To M. Novel, Confrère in Algiers, Mar. 28, 1647; *cf.* also, *v.g.*, *Lett.*, i., 443, No. 382; *Ibid.*, 568, No. 485.

As far as is known, St. Vincent never came in touch with Théophraste Renaudot, who was engaged in philanthropic work especially among the workingmen at the time. Neither is anything known of his relations with the Company of the Blessed Sacrament beyond the fact that he showed personal interest in their charitable endeavors and was himself a member.

The Ladies and Daughters of Charity were most intimately associated. But their mutual relations can hardly be called systematic coöperation in the present acceptation of the term in the field of social service, when we consider that the first idea of St. Vincent in originating the Daughters of Charity was to organize a band of earnest, enthusiastic, and reliable workers with whom to replace the servants of the Ladies who visited the sick more as a matter of routine and of obligation to their mistresses than out of love for the poor sick.

Moreover, until the Daughters of Charity received their rule (1646 and 1655), they were considered part of the organization of the Ladies of Charity,[48] and their relations to the Ladies were rather submission to their direction than mutual coöperation. St. Vincent himself thus defines their conduct towards the Ladies: "It is for them to order and for you to obey. . . . You must . . . not encroach upon their authority in any way by ordering things yourselves, for you will spoil everything, my daughters, you will ruin the confraternity. . . . You must remember they give their goods for the maintenance of the confraternity; you give only your time, which would profit nothing without their goods. They are as the head of a body and you are only the feet."[49] And even after the Daughters of Charity received their rule these relations do not seem to have been materially affected, as is seen from their rule itself and from the conferences of St. Vincent.[50]

[48] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 279, 282, No. 26; Abelly, ii., 634.

[49] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 167-8, No. 1, date unknown.

[50] "They shall render . . . obedience in that which regards the service of the poor . . . to the Ladies of Charity of the parishes who are in charge." *Règles Communes*, chap. iv., art. 4, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 346; *v.g., Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 614, *Explication des Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses*, Aug. 24, 1659.

The only information we have concerning the mutual relations of the Daughters of Charity engaged in different fields of work is contained in the report of a meeting which St. Vincent held with the Sisters. Mlle. le Gras, at the request of St. Vincent, proposed two Sisters whom she considered qualified to be put in charge of the work for the poor and for the poor infants, respectively, and added that though separated by their work, they "still could aid each other mutually so that when they had need the one would not say to the other: 'This is not my affair.'" And Vincent heartily endorsed this statement.[51]

The results of our study of systematic coöperation in the social program of St. Vincent are, therefore, mostly negative as far as practical conclusions are concerned. This characteristic of his work may be explained to no small extent by his unaggressiveness. If an agency was already at work in a field, he would not enter, even with the purpose of coöperation, unless special circumstances, as in the case of the Ladies of Charity and the Hôtel-Dieu, demanded the contrary.

[51] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 300, No. 3, *Conseil du 19 Juin, 1647.*

CHAPTER III

Discrimination in Charity

1. *The Needy*

The discriminating care and relief of the sick and poor necessitates a more or less clearly marked distinction among the various classes of the needy. St. Vincent made this distinction.

His fundamental distinction was made between the able-bodied poor and the impotent poor. The former fell into two groups: those who were addicted to a life of idleness and consequent poverty from personal choice—the professional tramp and beggar—and those whom adverse industrial conditions or political turmoils had temporarily forced below the poverty line.

The impotent were also divided into two groups, according as they were totally dependent or only partially so. In the group of the totally dependent were reckoned the "little children of four to seven or eight years," the sick and crippled, and the decrepit. As partially helpless were considered those whom youth, i. e., "boys of eight to fifteen or twenty years," sickness, or old age hindered from gaining a full livelihood.[1]

St. Vincent's relations to these various classes are considered under the several headings Obligation of Earning One's Livelihood, Rehabilitation, Industrial Training, Relief.

2. *Case Investigation*

The works of St. Vincent show that he saw the necessity of investigating particular cases of distress. And, though his investigations lacked both the technique and the thoroughness of methods employed by modern social agen-

[1] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 430, *Règ. pour une conf. de char. d'hommes et de femmes et pour l'organisation d'une manufacture; cf. Ibid.*, 412-3, 418.

cies, still they were sufficiently thorough to insure definite knowledge of the particular needs of a case.

In the first place, the distinction among the various classes of poor which St. Vincent insisted upon in the distribution of alms, presupposes a certain amount of investigation.

A check on the careless or indiscriminate admission of the poor and sick to the care of the confraternities was found in the prescription of the various constitutions that no one officer could admit the poor to the alms of the association. He or she had to consult at least one fellow officer.[2]

Moreover, the constitutions prescribe that the confraternity care for "the sick [who are] truly poor and not those who have means of relieving themselves." The constitution for the united confraternity of men and women is very emphatic on this point. It reads: "Since the conference has been instituted for persons truly poor and truly sick, the officers will admit to the alms of the association only those whom they judge in conscience to be truly poor and sick."[3] Here again investigation was necessary to ascertain the truly needy and those who had no "means of relieving themselves."

Furthermore, the constitution for one of the conferences demands as a condition for admission to the care of the confraternity that the president "give a certificate that she has ascertained that they [the applicants] are poor, resident of the parish for three months, and sick but not afflicted with a contagious disease." She bases her information concerning this last point on the verdict of the physician who must first visit the patient.[4] The constitution for the Ladies of Saint-Sauveur at Paris contains similar but more specific instructions. It says: "Before the Ladies go to see the sick, the physician . . . goes to see them and prescribes what is

[2] *La prieure* with the advice of at least one of her assistants (*Ibid.*, 391); *le recteur* with the advice of *la prieure* or the assistant (*Ibid.*, 403); *la prieure* with the advice of *le recteur* and one assistant (*Ibid.*, 405); *le visiteur* with the advice of *le recteur* or *le commandeur* (*Ibid.*, 414, 420); *le prieur* with the advice of the *"recteur et autres officiers"* (*Ibid.*, 421).

[3] *Ibid.*, 391, 404-5, 424.

[4] *Ibid.*, 384.

necessary for them . . ., and one brings these prescriptions to the superioress that she may sign them and," with the advice of other officers, "admit the said sick to the confraternity if she ascertains by the prompt investigation which she makes that they fulfil the required conditions, i. e., that they have been resident in the said parish for three months and that they are not suffering from a lingering illness. . . . The said physician sends a written certificate to the said superioress that the Ladies can go to them without danger; or, if he has not yet been able to learn this because of secret maladies, he gives another certificate to send them such food as he judges necessary."[5] In these regulations we find definite lines of investigation clearly traced out.

Apart from the instructions contained in the constitutions, incidental remarks of St. Vincent found throughout his letters show how he inquired into the details of particular cases. The superior of the Capuchin Fathers at Sedan had complained to St. Vincent that the priests of the Mission wished to discontinue the charitable contributions they had been making to the Fathers for a long time. Before deciding the question, St. Vincent asked his confrère, the superior of Sedan, for information on a number of points. "I beg you, sir," he writes, "to tell me how much one has given them per week and per month heretofore; whether one still gives them anything and what; what reasons one has had to retrench this alms or to discontinue it; whether it is because it is easier for them to get along without it than it is for us to give it, and, finally, what is the sentiment of the family [i. e., your community] concerning the request these Fathers make that the charity be reintroduced. After you have given me information on all this, we shall see what it is proper to do."[6] He instructs one of the brothers of the Mission who was laboring in the devastated provinces to study the individual needs of the people there. He writes: "The Ladies have desired that I ask you to ascertain adroitly in each canton through which you pass, and in each village, the number of poor there who have need of being clothed

[5] *Ibid.*, 452-3.
[6] *Lett.*, iii., 245, No. 1203, To M. Coglée, Feb. 16, 1656.

in full or in part during the coming winter. . . . It is necessary then that you take the names of these poor people in order that, at the time of the distribution, the alms be for them and not for those who can get along without them. But in order to discriminate well, you must visit them in their homes to learn by personal observation the most needy and those who are less so. But, since you cannot possibly make all these visits alone, you can employ persons of piety and prudence . . . who inform you sincerely of the state of each one. But this information must be acquired without the poor knowing the purpose; otherwise those who already have some clothes will hide them so as to appear naked."[7]

Another particular case well worth mentioning is the following. A poor nobleman had been recommended to the charity of the Ladies. It had been reported that his live stock and household goods had been stolen and his crops destroyed. St. Vincent inquired into the case. "The Ladies would like to know from you," he wrote to the brother in the provinces, "whether this is true; whether nothing remains to this poor nobleman with which to rehabilitate himself or to subsist; whether he has any children and how many. Tell us, if you please, all that you can ascertain."[8]

The investigation was to be made impartially. The final draft of the constitution of the Ladies of Charity demands that the members "act always from motives of the pure love of God, having regard only for the greater amount of good that can be done, and not for the places and persons who have been recommended."[9] An earlier constitution is still more emphatic and explicit on this point. It says: "In order that favoritism, which is the ruin of good works, may not slip into it [the confraternity], the said officers, men and women, upon assuming office, shall promise that they will not use their influence either directly or indirectly, to have admitted to the benefits of the said association any of their relatives, special friends or wards; and that, even

[7] *Ibid.*, 508, No. 1425, To Frère Jean Parre at Ham, July 21, 1657.

[8] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 138, No. 3115, To Frère Jean Parre at Saint-Quentin, Sept. 6, 1659. It is evidently this letter which Bougaud (*History of St. Vincent de P.*, i., 249) erroneously calls "St. Vincent's notebook," and Nutting (*History of Nursing*, i., 414) his "careful notes."

[9] Art. 13, Coste, 105.

if some other officer of the said company on his own initiative proposes one of these, they shall depart as being incapable of passing judgment on this point which concerns themselves, and will leave the judgment to the others."[10]

We must not infer, however, that strict discrimination accompanied all of St. Vincent's charitable works. He seems, for example, to have admitted laymen to the retreats of Saint-Lazare without sounding their motives. Upon being told one day that among the many that came, there were some who did not turn the exercises to proper advantage, he replied: "It is no trifle if a part profit by them." When informed further that some seemed to attend the retreats for the sake of the free board rather than from spiritual motives, he said: "Oh, well, an alms is always pleasing to God. If you make their reception difficult it will happen that you will turn away some whom our Lord will wish to convert by this retreat and the excessive exactitude which you will manifest to examine their purpose will destroy in some the desire they will have conceived of giving themselves to God."[11]

To say nothing of the private alms which he distributed personally, he had the custom for many years of doling out alms at the door of Saint-Lazare. This was apparently done without investigating the individual conditions and needs of the applicants. Abelly says "bread or money" was given to "the poor passers-by at all hours of the day," and soup mixed with bread was "distributed three times a week at a regular hour to all the poor who presented themselves, from whatever place they came."[12] It is less likely still that any investigation was made during the Fronde when the establishments of St. Vincent at Paris distributed alms to more than 2,000 persons daily.[13]

Thus we see that St. Vincent recognized the necessity of case investigation in principle. He embodied the general outlines of such investigation in his various constitutions

[10] *Règ. de la Confrérie de la Char. d'hommes et de femmes,* Courboing, 1622, *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 424.

[11] Abelly, ii., 354.

[12] *Ibid.*, 187.

[13] *Lett.*, ii., 155, No. 643, To M. Gaultier, Supr. at Richelieu, Feb. 25, 1649.

and made use of a more detailed examination in practice. It is, however, impossible to state to what extent he was in this matter led by his own convictions, and to what extent he was influenced by the officers of the different confraternities and the Ladies of Charity, or by his desire to relieve as much misery as possible with the inadequate amount of alms he was able to collect. He indicates that this latter consideration was an influencing factor when he, for example, writes: "Ascertain the most needy, for we do not intend to give very much." And, as a matter of fact, a closer study of the evidence shows that he insisted on investigation when it was a question of giving relief through an organization, for example, the confraternities, or with the money and donations of others, as in the case of relieving the provinces with the alms collected at Paris. But in his personal charities and in the use of the revenues of St. Lazare the evidence seems to indicate that he was less discriminating.

3. *Case Records*

As far as is known, St. Vincent was far from keeping records of all the cases that came under his care. Still we know that he caused records to be kept. The missionary, for example, who distributed alms to the poor religious in the provinces for a number of years demanded a receipt from each house in accordance with St. Vincent's orders.[14] These receipts, whether kept in book form or not, constituted at least the skeleton of records.

One constitution prescribes that the custodian of the wardrobe "shall keep an account of the articles she lends to the poor, [also an account] of their name and of their residence."[15] The relief programme of Mâcon ordained that

[14] *Lett.*, i., 319, No. 295, To M. du Coudray, July 10, 1640. The same letter contains orders that receipts be demanded also for alms given to the towns. *Cf.* also Abelly, ii., 505.

[15] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 385. We cannot lay much stress on this regulation, however, for it seems to have been prompted more by the desire of avoiding the loss of articles than of keeping case records for the better care of the poor. We read in another constitution: "She [who has been on duty for the day] shall tell her [who is to serve on the following day] the name, the place, the number, and the condition of the sick in order to prepare their necessaries" (*Ibid.*, 421). But we are not told that this information was committed to writing.

"a list be made of all the poor of the town who desired to remain there."[16]

More complete and direct evidence is found in still another of St. Vincent's constitutions. The procurator, it reads, "shall have a register in which . . . he shall write . . . the name of the poor sick assisted by the confraternity, the day of their reception, of their death or recovery."[17] But the closest approach to the modern method of record keeping is contained in the instruction given by St. Vincent de Paul to the two members of his Congregation working among the Christian captives of Tunis. These instructions say in part: "Each shall be careful to write the names of the captives whom they will assist, together with the amount which they will distribute to them, and to notify each other of them, in order that both may not give to the same person and that from these memoranda the said M. Levacher [one of the two workers concerned] may be able to show by the accounts, which he shall send us every year, to whom and how much has been given every month."[18]

Scanty though the evidence is, it suffices to show that St. Vincent made use of case records, however primitive and incomplete in comparison with modern methods, and that he was convinced of their practicality or even necessity.[19]

[16] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 433.

[17] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 410; Abelly, ii., 441-2.

[18] *Lett.*, ii., 523.

[19] Discrimination was nothing new in the history of Catholic charities. It dates back to the very first ages of the Christian era. Nor do St. Vincent's "principles" on Discrimination in Charity embody any advanced ideas on this point. *Cf., v.g.,* the original and systematic relief programme of Juan Luis Vives (born at Valencia, 1492; died at Bruges, 1540), published under the title of *De subventione pauperum: sive de humanis necessitatibus,* Bruges, 1526. According to this programme, it was incumbent upon the municipality to provide for its needy. Two members of the city council, accompanied by a secretary, went from house to house and took an exact account of the conditions of the needy, noting the name of each, the number of their children, the cause of their misery, and the kind of life they were leading. Each class of indigents was then given appropriate and proportionate relief. See Lallemand, *Histoire de la Charité,* vol. iv., part 1, pp. 10-261.

CHAPTER IV

Revenues

The funds necessary for St. Vincent's numerous charities came from a variety of sources. We may, however, for the sake of clearness and convenience class them under the two captions of Private Contributions and State Aid. The question of publicity as a method of arousing and sustaining interest and enthusiasm, and hence as an indirect means of procuring funds, also suggests itself naturally for treatment here.

1. *Private Contributions*

Provision is made for the procuring of alms in the constitutions of all the conferences. A favorite method, common to confraternities of both men and women, was by collections. When a confraternity was established in a parish, a collection was usually taken up at once, which netted a sum of money more or less large according to the size and wealth of the parish. At the same time, clothes, linens, and other commodities necessary for the care of the poor, were solicited. Thereafter collections of money were taken up in the churches, or from house to house, and only on Sundays and feast days, or daily. Each member had his or her turn at taking up the collection.[1] The money thus collected was entrusted to the treasurer. The rector or the procurator was also asked in some cases to keep a record of it.

The poor box was a second method of raising funds.

[1] The *règlement de la confrérie de charité de la paroisse de Saint-Saveur*, Paris, 1629, drafted by St. Vincent after twelve years of experience in this particular field, contains the significant clause: The collection "is made by the women *(femmes)* and not by the young ladies *(filles)*." *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 453. One constitution which provides for no other collection, prescribes that "the custodian of the wardrobe will make a collection of linen with the treasurer once during her term of office." *Ibid.*, 385. Special collections were taken up to meet extraordinary needs; *e.g.*, general collections in the parishes of Paris for the Christian captives. *Cf. Lett.*, iv., pp. 14, 21, 23, 31, 35, 36.

These boxes were placed both in the churches and in the inns of the city. The landlady was instructed to admonish the guests and the travelers to contribute their mite. The boxes were opened every month or every two months, in the presence of the rector of the association, the president and the treasurer, or even of all the officers. Their contents were placed in the hands of the treasurer or procurator. The pastor kept one record and the treasurer another.[2]

Foundations were also made in favor of the confraternities. The first purpose of the procuratorship in the women's organizations was to have a capable man to manage the foundations and to turn them to the best advantage of the confraternity under the immediate direction of the other officers without whose consent he could enter upon no valid contract affecting immovable goods of the confraternity. He was obliged to render frequent account to the officers concerning the state of the affairs entrusted to him.[3]

Other sources were direct contributions and legacies.[4] Of the work at Mâcon Abelly[5] says: "Everyone is voluntarily inclined to contribute to so worthy a cause, some in money, others in wheat, or in other commodities according to their power." After the organization of one of the Ladies' confraternities at Paris, they were asked what each wished to contribute. "The one will say," continues the constitution, " 'I give two, three sheets,' and the others some shirts, etc., and at the same time one writes it down for fear of losing knowledge of it. . . ."[6] For the relief of the devastated provinces enormous sums were donated by the queen, the Ladies, and, in fact, as St. Vincent states in one of his letters, "all Paris

[2] *Ibid.*, 397, 404, 422-3, 432. In one of the confraternities of both men and women, the treasurer of the women could not open the poor box at the inn except in the presence of one of the officers of the men. The poor box in churches and inns as a means of raising funds for charity was in common vogue at that time.

[3] *Ibid.*, 389-90, 395-6, 423.

[4] *Ibid.*, 384, 404, 410, 418.

[5] Vol. i., 98.

[6] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 453-4. Apart from this constitution, there is only one other which makes mention of any special contributions from the members. The final constitution of the Ladies of Charity at Paris obliges all the members to contribute to the expenditures agreed upon, as also to contribute money, clothes, etc., to the common treasury every month "according to their devotion." Coste, 104.

contributes to this and furnishes all things necessary to man for nourishment and clothing, for sicknesses and for work."[7]

As regards legacies, the Ladies of Charity of Paris in one of their meetings thought it good to remind the dying "to make pious legacies in favor of the poor of whom the conference takes care." St. Vincent heartily approved of the idea "to suggest this thought to rich persons when visiting them in their illnesses."[8]

We find a further method applied in the men's confraternities of the country districts. Each member of the confraternity was requested to raise according to his ability, one, two, or more, sheep, and the profits accruing from them were "sold yearly around the feast of St. John by the visitor, according to the orders given him by the directors of the said association." The sheep were branded with the mark of the association, and the brand was to be renewed every five years.[9]

We know, too, from the constitutions that part of the revenue of the hospital was at times turned into the treasury of the confraternities. Finally, in the confraternities of both men and women, the former were to give to the women "the fourth part of their annual revenue, or more if necessary."[10]

Practically all the alms collected by these various methods were employed directly for the relief of the poor. Only an insignificant sum was expended in salaries for the workers, since the vast majority of these were volunteers,[11] and St. Vincent was very insistent that all the alms be distributed strictly according to the purpose for which they were intended and not be diverted "to any other use under

[7] *Lett.*, ii., 379, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Warsaw, No. 832, Jan. 3, 1652.

[8] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 217.

[9] *Ibid.*, 413, 418. St. Vincent thought it good to propose to the people of Quinze-Vingts to give 20 or 25 chickens to the conference of that place to furnish the eggs necessary for the sick. The chickens could be entrusted to one of the women, a member of the confraternity. *Lett.*, i., 312, No. 289, To Mlle. le Gras (1640).

[10] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 418, 426, 432.

[11] The Daughters of Charity received their means of support from a variety of sources. Their mother house at Paris, for example, was supported by money which the Sisters earned by working during their spare moments, by contributions from the Ladies of Charity, by ordinary alms, and by the revenue accruing from a royal foundation amounting to 2,000 livres annually. *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 498; *Confér. aux Filles de la Charité*, ii., 269; *cf.* also *Lett.*, iii., 661.

any pretext of charity whatsoever," and especially that not the least part of them be appropriated for private use.[12]

2. *State Aid*

St. Vincent solicited and received aid from the state. He did not hesitate to appeal to the king for assistance when necessity demanded. He induced the king, for example, to issue letters patent which conferred upon the hospital for galley slaves at Marseille 12,000 livres of the annual revenue from the salt tax. He obtained for the foundlings 12,000 livres annually, as also the buildings at Bicêtre, which had served for some time as a hospital for sick soldiers. And when the location proved insanitary for the infants, he hoped that it might "please the Parliament of the city to donate another [place]."[13] He likewise obtained from the king the house and land at La Salpêtrière for the General Hospital. During the distress of the provinces, too, he obtained aid from the crown. He received, for example, 45,000 livres from the king for the religious of both sexes of these districts.[14]

St. Vincent always approached the queen mother with confidence in all his needs. She gave, for example, 2,000 livres for the relief of the impoverished nobles of Lorraine and 6,000 for the assistance of poor ecclesiastics. On one occasion, when she had no money on hand, she gave her jewels valuing 7,000 livres, and, on another occasion, jewels worth 18,000 livres.[15]

We know likewise that Vincent received frequent assistance from other civil officials. The king and queen of Poland lent very substantial aid to both the priests of the Mission and to the Daughters of Charity. Richelieu established a conference of charity at Richelieu and endowed it.[16]

[12] *Lett.*, i., 316-7, No. 292, To M. du Coudray at Toul, June 17, 1640; *Ibid.*, iii., 528, 562, 570, 653; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 614; *Ibid.*, ii., 269, 273, 307, 621, etc., etc.

[13] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 73, No. 3049, To Mlle. le Gras, April 5, 1649.

[14] *Lett.*, i., 334, No. 299, To M. Codoing at Annecy, July 26, 1640.

[15] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 52, No. 3030, To M. Portail at Paris, Oct. 14, 1644; *Ibid.*, 69, No. 3046, Jan. 3, 1648; Abelly, iii., 178.

[16] *Lett.*, i., 206, No. 201, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Richelieu, Mar. 22, 1638. St. Vincent received much other financial aid from the Cardinal through the intervention of the latter's niece, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, who was one of St. Vincent's most ardent associates in the work of charity.

St. Vincent also prevailed upon the state to protect the hospitals and their revenues against the soldiers in the provinces.

Still, in all these instances, it was a particular move on the part of the state to meet some individual, specific emergency. We nowhere find St. Vincent advocating new social legislation, nor urging as a principle the state's obligation to relieve its needy, as did, for example, Joan Luis Vives a century earlier.[17] It is true, the city of Mâcon forbade begging in consequence of Vincent's relief work there, but it is impossible to estimate his responsibility in the measure. The king in 1656, forbade begging in Paris and commanded the beggars either to work, or to leave the city, or to retire to the *Hôpital-Général.* But St. Vincent was opposed to this compulsory clause of the law and, moreover, legislation against vagrancy and mendicancy was nothing novel in France, or even in Paris, at the middle of the seventeenth century.

The evidence on record points, therefore, to the conclusion that St. Vincent turned to the state for assistance in his work, not on principle, but merely from expediency, i. e., as to any other hopeful source of assistance. And probably he would never have applied to the king for help, had sufficient means been supplied him through private endeavor. He seems, at least, to insinuate in one of his letters that the asking of royal aid was an unpleasant alternative. He says: "Although the king has given reason to hope for another alms . . ., one cannot rely upon it, because kings promise quickly but forget to fulfill their promises, at least, [they forget] to have persons near them to remind them often of them. But we have none here who have enough charity for the poor and liberty with the king to procure this benefit for them."[18]

3. *Publicity*

We find apparently contradictory views of St. Vincent on the question of publicity as an indirect medium of pro-

[17] *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, vol. iv., part i., pp. 11 sqq.

[18] *Lett.*, iii., 661, No. 1537, To M. Delville, Confrère at Arras, Nov. 10, 1657.

curing funds. On the one hand, he seems bitterly opposed to all that savors of publicity. In one of his letters he relates some of the good accomplished by his agencies and concludes by accusing himself of violating what he calls "the little maxim we have of not writing about it."[19] He is deeply grieved that a priest of the Mission published a eulogy of the Congregation and continues: "God has given me the grace to remain firm thus far in refusing to consent that anything be published which makes the Company known and esteemed, although I have been hard pressed to do so, particularly as regards some accounts that have come from Madagascar, the Barbary States, and the Hebrides; and still less would I have permitted the publication of a thing which touches upon the essence and the spirit, the birth and the progress, the functions and the end of our Institute."[20] "It seems to me," he says again, "that we ought to make a special effort not to make ourselves known so much by writings, publications and accounts, . . . as to do so by good works which sooner or later will speak a language more advantageous than all one does for personal show and manifestation."[21]

Abelly relates that the superior of the Irish missions once asked St. Vincent if he should compile a brief account of the activities of the priests in Ireland. He received the reply "that it was sufficient that God knew all that was done and that the humility of our Lord demanded that the little Company of the Mission hide itself in God with Jesus Christ to honor His hidden life."[22] Similarly the priests of the Mission who were laboring in the devastated provinces asked St. Vincent if they should receive from the different cities a certificate of the assistance rendered, as they had done from the city of Toul. Vincent answered that "it sufficed that God alone had knowledge of their works and that the poor

[19] *Lett.*, ii., 438, No. 878, To M. Lagault, Doctor of the Sorbonne at Rome, June 21, 1652.

[20] *Lett.*, iii., 414, No. 1340, To M. Delville, Confrère at Arras, Feb. 7, 1657. Still when a certain parish priest requested information concerning the manner of life of the Daughters of Charity, St. Vincent told a Sister "that she should tell him everything and that she should conceal nothing." *Lett.*, i., 170, No. 166, To Mlle. le Gras (1637).

[21] *Lett.*, i., 412, No. 357, To M. Codoing, Supr. at Rome, July 2, 1642.

[22] Abelly, ii., 199.

were relieved by them, without wishing to produce other testimony."[23]

St. Vincent was, in fact, so habitually silent concerning his works that Abelly says even "those of his Company knew but a part of his many holy undertakings and of the many spiritual and corporal charities he practised towards all classes of persons." "And there is no doubt," he adds "that many of his confrères will be astonished to read in this work [*La Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul,* which was published four years after the servant of God had passed to his eternal reward] a great number of which they have never had any knowledge."[24]

On the other hand, St. Vincent requests the various superiors to keep a record of notable events. He says: "I ask you: 1. To preserve henceforth the letters, of whatever they treat, which one will write to you and to those of your house when they contain some notable particular which can be of any consequence, or which can serve as instruction for the future . . .; 2. to take note during the year of the most noteworthy events, both spiritual and temporal, which take place in your house and in the missions, and other exercises outside the house, and to put them in the form of a letter, around the feast of St. John, at which time the missions are ordinarily finished, and to send the said letter to us that we may write a circular if we think fit."[25] And again he asks them "to take care that in each house of the Company one makes a collection, if one has not already begun to do so, of all the missions which will be given in the future, as also of those which are being given at present, noting the following circumstances as carefully as possible: 1. the place and diocese of each mission; 2. the month and the year in which it is given; 3. how far the place is distant from the city where our house is established; 4. how many Communions there are; 5. how many workers [missionaries] and who has the direction of them; 6. how long it lasted; 7. if it was successful or not, and why; 8. in what time it is preferable to make it; 9. if a conference of charity is established there; 10. if

[23] *Ibid.*, 488.
[24] Abelly, iii., 274-5.
[25] *Lett.*, iv., 520, No. 1992.

there are any heretics there; and other notable circumstances."[26]

Moreover, St. Vincent employed all available methods of publicity to excite the interest of the public in the distress of the frontier provinces. His work was commended and aid solicited from the pulpits of the various churches of Paris.[27] The priests of the Mission working in the stricken districts sent letters to St. Vincent in which they depicted the extreme misery of the people and related the good that was being accomplished. Vincent read these letters at the meetings of the Ladies of Charity and sent them to other places where they passed from hand to hand making their appeal for aid.[28]

Many of these letters, however, were put to still greater advantage. As St. Vincent tells us, "accounts are compiled from them and printed. These the Ladies distribute in the homes of the rich and go there to ask alms."[29] The first edition of these accounts, called *Relations,* was printed in September, 1650. It was distributed wherever there was hope of obtaining alms, in Paris, and even through the provinces. It proved very successful, and other editions followed at more or less regular intervals until December, 1655. In all, twenty-nine numbers appeared. Ordinarily three or four thousand copies of four pages in quarto were printed in each edition.

These *Relations* were composed for the main part of letters from St. Vincent's missionaries in the devastated provinces, in which they depicted the misery of the people

[26] *Ibid.*, 521, No. 1993.

[27] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 660; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 224.

[28] "One is accustomed to read at the meeting of the Ladies of Charity, which is held for the assistance of the poor of the frontiers of Champagne and Picardy, the letters which are sent to us by our brother Jean Parre, who is employed in the distribution of the alms which these good ladies send thither every week" (*Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 193, No. 63, *Confér. du 9 Juin, 1656).* *Cf.* also letters to Jean Parre, *Lett.*, iii., 563, No. 1470, Sept. 8, 1657; *Ibid.*, 628, No. 1511, Oct. 20, 1657; *Ibid.*, 639, No. 1522, Oct. 27, 1657; *Lett.*, iv., 233, No. 1759, Nov. 23, 1658; *Ibid.*, 236, No. 1762, Nov. 30, 1658; *Ibid.*, 245, No. 1770, Dec. 21, 1658. At other times he would send similar letters to an individual lady who he knew was particularly interested; *v.g.*, a letter of M. Get, Supr. at Marseilles, he sent to the Duchess of Aiguillon, who had the interests of the hospital at that place very much at heart (*Lett.*, iv., No. 1757, To M. Get, Nov. 22, 1658). *Cf.* also *Lett.*, ii., 590, No. 1004, Au Frère Jean Parre, at Saint-Quentin, Nov. 29, 1653; Abelly, ii., 491.

[29] *Lett.*, iii., 322, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656.

and pleaded for alms. Occasionally letters from the parish priests and civil officials of the provinces were added. At the end of each number were mentioned the names of the persons designated to receive the contributions; namely, the parish priests of Paris, the president of the Ladies of Charity, Mme. de Herse, a very prominent member of the confraternity, and, after May, 1652, Mlle. de Lamoignon, also a prominent member.

Though St. Vincent and the Ladies of Charity were undoubtedly the principal collaborators in the publication of the *Relations*, still Vincent was neither the founder nor the director of the work. Some authors give the credit to the Jansenist, Charles Maignart de Bernières, but more probably it is due to one of St. Vincent's intimate associates.[30]

We have further evidence of St. Vincent's belief in publicity when he had hopes of thereby arousing the interest and enthusiasm of others for the cause of charity. The queen mother once donated highly valued jewels to be sold for charity with the request to suppress the name of the donor. Vincent nevertheless felt obliged to publish it. He said to her: "Madame, I ask your majesty to pardon me if I cannot conceal an act of charity so noble. It is good, Madame, that all Paris and even all France know it, and I feel obliged to publish it wherever I can."[31] This incident clearly shows that in St. Vincent's estimation publicity for a good end was entirely compatible with the practice of charity.

A closer study of these various views of St. Vincent on publicity leads us to the following conclusions. In the first place, he was strenuously opposed to publicity regarding the rule of the Priests of the Mission and of the Daughters of Charity as also of their works. Publicity in these matters,

[30] Coste, 36-8; Abelly, i., 413-4, *Pièces Justificatives*, V.; Feillet, 229-33. The *Relations* were an innovation as a medium of publicity in the field of charity. There was, however, considerable literature on the question of charity published at this period; *v.g.*, *l'Aumone chrétienne et ecclésiastique*, of Jansenistic authorship; *Exhortation aux Parisiens sur les secours des pauvres*, 48 pp., Antoine Godeau, Bishop of Grasse and Vence, 1652; *Magasin charitable*, similar to the *Relations*, 1653; *l'Advis important; le Nouvel Advis important; la Suite du nouvel advis important de l'état déplorable des pauvres du Blaisons et de quelques autres provinces*, all appearing about 1660.

[31] Abelly, iii., 178-9.

he said, would, on the one hand, violate humility and, on the other, arouse the envy of others.[32]

Secondly, he desired to have the works and successes of his Company recorded, not for general publication, but for the mutual edification and instruction of the brethren.[33]

Thirdly, he learned by experience the practical value of bringing the needs of the poor to the notice of the public and for a number of years contributed to the printing and distribution of leaflets in behalf of charity.[34]

[32] *Lett.*, iii., 414, No. 1340, To M. Delville, Confrère at Arras, Feb. 7, 1657; *Ibid.*, 312, No. 1258, To M. Get, Supr. at Marseilles, July 14, 1656; Abelly, iii., 354. His quiet, unpretentious manner of procedure was without doubt a factor in his success.

[33] For the same reason, he encouraged by his example the exchange of letters within the Congregation, relating the undertakings and successes of the brethren; *v.g.*, *Lett.*, i., 241, No. 232, To M. de Sergis at Toulouse, Feb. 3, 1639.

[34] In doing so, he was not extolling the works of his Congregation in violation of his own principle, but merely stressing the sad plight of the poor and keeping the contributors informed regarding the good results accomplished through their contributions. For while St. Vincent both inspired and directed this vast undertaking, it was, in a sense, the work of the inhabitants of Paris.

CHAPTER V

The Personnel

1. *The Social Worker*

A. *The Various Classes Engaged in Social Service*

Social service, to the mind of St. Vincent de Paul, was not restricted by sex, state of life, or social status. We find that he employed both men and women. Married women, widows and young ladies were admitted without any discrimination into his many conferences. Girls of the peasantry formed the beginnings of the Daughters of Charity. The women of the towns and villages labored for the sick and the poor of the country districts. The *élite* of French society and even the queen mother and the ladies of her court had their special confraternities of charity.

A glance at the works of St. Vincent shows that women played a far more important rôle in his social activities than did the men. St. Vincent disclosed his idea of systematizing charity at Châtillon-les-Dombes to "some of the most zealous and wealthy women of the parish," and with their advice and coöperation organized the conference of charity that served as the model for the numerous others that very soon dotted all France. To Mme. de Gondi is due the real credit of founding the Congregation of the Mission. Mlle. le Gras coöperated with St. Vincent in organizing the Daughters of Charity; she was, in fact, his most reliable and useful aid throughout the last thirty years of his charitable career. When St. Vincent determined to care for the foundlings he immediately consulted the Ladies of Charity of Paris; they undertook to finance the enterprise and continued to do so even at a great sacrifice. It was principally through these same Ladies of Charity that St. Vincent procured the vast sums of money necessary for the alleviation of distress in the provinces. They, too, conceived and fostered the project

of erecting the *Hôpital-Général* for the poor of Paris. The Duchess d'Aiguillon rendered invaluable financial aid to St. Vincent principally in his work among the Christian captives. And, finally the conference of the Ladies of Charity at Paris, proved to be, as it were, a training school from which went forth foundresses of various other charitable institutions and congregations.

We find a band of pious and zealous men organized under the leadership of M. de Renti to assist the impoverished nobles. Apart from these, we find the men organized for social service only in combination with the women.[1] These latter organizations did not prove successful. As St. Vincent himself said, the men were inclined to arrogate the administration entirely to themselves and, "because of the common purse, it was found necessary to remove the men" from the board of directors. After thus criticizing the behavior of the men, he adds: "And I can bear this testimony in favor of the women, that there is nothing to criticize in their administration, so great is their care and fidelity."[2]

There is no evidence by which we can gauge the relative efficiency and success of the married women, widows, and young ladies working in the various conferences. We find but two mentions made of discrimination among them. In the constitution of the conference of Saint-Sauveur's parish at Paris we read that the "collection is made by the women and not by the young ladies."[3] The final draft of the constitutions for the Ladies of Charity demands that the officers be chosen "from among the widows and the young ladies, and not from among the married women."[4]

The peasant girls, under the direction and training of St. Vincent and Mlle. le Gras, proved very successful. The women of the towns and villages, too, were competent workers. The society women of Paris failed as visiting nurses, but they took a personal and direct interest in St.

[1] We do not here include the Priests and Brothers of the Congregation of the Mission; their field was primarily the spiritual, although a number of them labored indefatigably for the relief of the provinces.

[2] *Lett.*, ii., 270, No. 735, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa, Sept. 2, 1650.

[3] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 453.

[4] Coste, 100.

Vincent's works throughout, and rendered him invaluable service, especially by financing his undertakings.

B. *The Trained Social Worker*

As far as is known, the social workers of the conferences underwent no systematic preparation before entering upon their duties. Their training was limited to the general instructions contained in their respective constitutions and to the advice that the more experienced were able to give.[5]

But with the first Daughters of Charity, the necessity of some training was brought home to St. Vincent. The workers in the towns and villages were older, more experienced and remained under the influences of home environments. Here, on the contrary, were a number of inexperienced, and often ignorant, peasant girls devoting their full time to the care of the sick in a large city. St. Vincent and Mlle. le Gras, it is true, gave them what advice they considered necessary to aid them in their relations both towards the Ladies under whom they were placed, and towards the poor sick.

But this did not prove sufficient. The girls were unequal, in point of character as well as efficiency, to the demands made upon them. We shall quote from the letters of St. Vincent in illustration. "The lady officers of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois," he says in one of them, "were here yesterday to make bitter remonstrances concerning our Sister Marie, not so much to withdraw her, as to have girls who know how to serve and to make the compositions and the remedies; [they complained] that the companion of Marie knows nothing, not even the homes of the Ladies, so that she can notify them. . . . You must see how to remove this girl and whom you will send in her place, or rather [how] to give them some other one who knows how to make the compositions and has had some experience. This shows the necessity of your coming to this parish, and of all your girls being well trained."[6] "Dismiss Jeanne," he says in

[5] Mlle. le Gras visited the various conferences of the towns and villages, encouraged the members to acquit themselves worthily of their duties, instructed them in the service of the sick, and suggested methods of procuring the relief and salvation of their patients. Abelly, i., 156, 160.

[6] *Lett.*, i., 115, No. 110, To Mlle. le Gras, 1635.

another of his letters, "and tell her it is for having struck her companion . . ., and tell the others that this is not the first time that she has struck [them]; that she has been pardoned for the others, but that the scandal will be too great, and that it must not be said of the Daughters of Charity, that they strike one another like dog and cat."[7] To cite from another letter: "It will be very difficult," he says, "to maintain these creatures in the state necessary to have things go well. Those of the parish of Saint-Saveur, since their rebellion, are not so careful and they complain much; they will see in the course of time the harm they are doing."[8]

The dates of these letters show that they were written after St. Vincent had introduced a course of training for his Daughters of Charity. We may justly conclude, therefore, that similar disorders occurred more frequently in the beginning and that it was these that taught St. Vincent the necessity of training his nurses before assigning them to work.

In the beginning a trial was made of three or four of the more capable. They were placed under the direction of Mlle. le Gras in her home in the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet. This was in the year 1633. As the number increased, they were transferred to another house in the village of la Chapelle, half a league from Paris. This place was chosen as well fitted to train, nourish, and clothe the girls after the manner of the poor, among whom they were to work. About the year 1642, however, they returned to Paris and established themselves in more commodious quarters in the suburb of Saint-Lazare, where they remained until the French Revolution.

Concerning the nature of the training given to the first Daughters of Charity, Abelly merely says in a summary manner "that it was necessary to take particular care to train them for the service of the sick, to teach them to bleed [the patients], and to prepare the remedies, and, still more, to train and form them in the exercise of prayer and of

[7] *Ibid.*, 165, No. 161, To Mlle. le Gras, 1637.
[8] *Ibid.*, 170, No. 166, To Mlle. le Gras, 1637.

spiritual life."[9] But from St. Vincent's letters and conferences we are able to glean a few details.

In the first place, St. Vincent from the beginning followed the policy of placing all the young recruits in one house under the guidance of a competent directress. Mlle. le Gras filled this position for a period of fifteen years; thereupon a mistress of novices was appointed.[10] St. Vincent adopted this method because convinced, in the light of experience, of its advantages over individual training. He himself says on this point: "Formerly in many houses, and particularly at the Hôtel-Dieu, it was done as follows: The new comer was placed under an older [Sister] that she might train her and have charge of her. But it was found that the nieces bound themselves in such a manner to their aunts—so they called them—that partialities were practised which put the houses in disorder. Hence one thought it better to appoint a mistress who had care of the novices, and they were all placed together."[11]

The training ordinarily lasted from six months to a year.[12] Most probably the length was determined in the individual case by the docility and natural talent of the novice. But pressed as St. Vincent was for workers, we can be sure that the training was completed in as short a time as possible.[13]

We have the broad outlines of the first training school of the Daughters of Charity from St. Vincent himself. The novices, he says, are generally more than thirty in number. Mlle. le Gras employs some of them "to instruct the little girls of the poor who come to school at her house;

[9] Vol. i., 167.

[10] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 91; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 314-5, No. 4. *Conseil du 30 Octobre, 1647.*

[11] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 314-5. Concerning these disorders, *cf., v.g.*, Nutting, i., 318-9.

[12] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 499, 1646.

[13] St. Vincent gives us an insight into his plight when he writes: "It is to our deep regret that we cannot pledge ourselves to give two Daughters of Charity to the hospital of Saint-Malo within a month or two, because Mlle. le Gras has none in readiness and it takes a long time to train them well. The Bishop of Angers has waited two years to procure two for a hospital and we have not yet been able to send them. Many others are also waiting, to whom we ought to give assent before pledging ourselves elsewhere." *Lett.*, iii., 331, No. 1276, To a Confrère at Rennes, Aug. 26, 1656. *Cf.* also Abelly, ii., 458.

others to visit the sick of the parish, bringing to them food or medicines, or nursing them; others to let the blood and dress the sores of the poor who come to them from without for this purpose; others to sew or to do similar work; others to learn to read or write; others to perform the little household duties; all according to the orders given them."[14] It is evident from this sketch that the training of the Daughters of Charity was acquired by coming in actual contact with their problems, and that it extended to all the phases of the work in which they were afterwards to be engaged.[15] It was St. Vincent's desire that all the novices learn to read and write. "How I desire," he writes to Mlle. le Gras, "that your girls exercise themselves in learning to read. . . .!"[16] And in one of his conferences he says: "It is very desirable that all know it" [i. e. how to read and write].[17]

Still the rule which he gave his Daughters of Charity seems to discriminate. It speaks of "those *who will have permission* to learn to write" and of "those *who have permission* to learn to read and write." These, it says, can use for that purpose "at most a half hour after dinner, at the time" appointed by the superioress, but so that they "in no way prejudice the service of the poor or any of the duties of the Company." On Sundays another half hour was assigned for the same purpose and under the same restrictions.[18]

The purpose St. Vincent had in view in advocating the education of his social workers is evident from his own words as they have come down to us in one of his conferences. He says: "Apply yourselves to learn to read, not for

[14] *Mémoire adressé à l'archevêque de Paris pour obtenir l'érection des filles de la charité, en confrérie, 1646, Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 498.

[15] St. Vincent was convinced from experience that this general training at the mother house better fitted a novice for the life of a Daughter of Charity than did, for example, a more specialized training in a house of the missions. *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 14, No. 2093.

[16] *Lett.,* i., 265, No. 253 (1639). The educational opportunities offered throughout France were at this period inoperative to a great extent, especially in the country districts. St. Vincent seems not at all surprised that many of the novices from the country knew neither how to read nor write. See pp. 221-2.

[17] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* i., 190, No. 19, *Premières Expl., etc.,* Jan. 29, 1645.

[18] *Règles Communes,* ch. ix., art. 11 and 16, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 559; *Ibid.,* 569; *Ibid.,* 574.

your own satisfaction and individual benefit, but to render yourselves capable of instructing the little girls in the places whither you will be sent."[19] He is more detailed in a later conference when he expresses his desire that all learn to read and write, "not in order to be learned, for frequently knowledge only elates the heart and exalts the mind unreasonably by filling it with pride, but in order to facilitate the means of observing your rules more exactly, to keep your accounts or receipts and expenses in good condition, to give your news of the distant places where you will be, to assure your superiors of your respects and your dependence, especially to teach the poor little girls of the village; in a word, that you may be better fitted to serve God."[20]

The learning of the catechism comprised a further part of the training of the first Daughters of Charity. "How I desire," he writes to Mlle. le Gras, "that your girls . . . know well the catechism that you teach!"[21] The rule prescribes that the Sisters employ part of their time on Sundays and feast days for "the practice of (teaching) catechism among themselves." The superioress or one of the older Sisters presided at these assemblies. St Vincent considered this instruction of such importance that he thought fit to have it given also on other days at specified times, during which the poor were not permitted to call. Its purpose was self-instruction and, as the rule says, "to render themselves capable of instructing the poor and the children in the things necessary for their salvation."[22]

As regards the special training of the Daughters of Charity in their duties as nurses, no details have come down to us. Still the fact that the Daughters prepared the medicines, compounded remedies "in the parishes of Paris without any complaint having ever been made" against them, bled the patients, dressed wounds, and had charge of the pharmacy of a hospital, goes to show that the training of

[19] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 6, No. 1, *Premières Expl., etc.,* July 31, 1634; *cf.* also *Ibid.*, 42, No. 6, *Premières Expl., etc.,* Aug. 16, 1641.

[20] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., No. 19, *Premières Expl., etc.,* Jan. 29, 1645.

[21] *Lett.*, i., 265, No. 253 (1639).

[22] *Règles Communes*, ch. ix., art. 16, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 569, sqq. No. 99, *Premières Expl., etc.,* Dec. 8, 1658.

the first Daughters of Charity was fully sufficient to meet the demands of the medical science of that period.[23]

Besides the intellectual and medical training, St. Vincent insisted also on the moral training of his recruits. The purpose of this training was self-sanctification and, at the same time, character formation. It was to teach the novices to rise superior to petty differences and jealousies, to bear up under trials and disappointments, and to render themselves immune to the moral dangers connected with their work.

Hence we find that St. Vincent laid great emphasis on mutual charity and forbearance, on humility, obedience to the rules of the Company, and detachment from earthly goods and honors. These virtues served as an antidote to jealousy and envy, while assuring unity among the members and concerted endeavor in their social activities. Patience and trust in God upheld their courage in the face of disappointments. The practice of strict religious decorum, a modest reserve in the company of others, and the avoidance of unnecessary conversations and visiting combined to protect their virtue in the midst of moral dangers. In all these virtues did St. Vincent endeavor to ground his first Daughters of Charity, as a glance at his conferences to them amply shows.

C. *Part-Time and Full-Time Workers*

St. Vincent employed both part-time and full-time workers in the service of the needy. The members, both men and women, of the confraternities in the towns and villages and the Ladies of Charity of Paris were all part-time workers. They went about their wonted avocations and devoted only their spare moments to the interests of the poor, or the time allotted to them by the constitutions of their respective confraternities. The Daughters of Charity, on the contrary, were full-time workers. They left the world to give them-

[23] *Lett.*, i., 195, No. 189, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Richelieu, Feb. 20, 1638; *Ibid.*, iii., 239, No. 1198, To M. l'abbé Malleray at Nantes, Jan., 1656; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 119, No. 12, Jan. 1, 1644; *Ibid.*, ii., 469, No. 89, July 9, 1648; *Ibid.*, 572, No. 99, *Explication des Règles Communes (suite)*, Dec. 8, 1658; *Ibid.*, 629, *Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses*, ch. xviii., art. 16, 4°.

selves entirely to a life of charity under the immediate direction of St. Vincent and Mlle. le Gras.

St. Vincent expresses his preference for workers of the latter type when he says, apparently in confirmation of a similar preference on the part of Mlle. le Gras: "It is true, it is to be desired that persons who will wish to devote themselves to so noble a work, have no other view nor occupation but that."[24] Practical results, too, were in favor of the full-time worker. They were more settled and interested in the work and were better prepared for it. Moreover, St. Vincent was constantly in direct touch with them, to encourage, admonish, or reprove as occasion demanded. He could suit the individual to the position as far as possible, removing and replacing them as circumstances changed and new needs arose.

D. *The Volunteer*

All the organized social workers of St. Vincent were, with one known exception, volunteers. Such were the members of the confraternities, the Ladies of Charity and the Daughters of Charity. It seems to have been taken ordinarily as a matter of course that both the members and the officers were to offer their services without thought of remuneration. Only once do we find express mention made of it. The constitution for the conference of men and women at Courboing states that the treasurer shall perform his duties "without being able to ask or hope for any salary for it."[25]

The single known exception to volunteer service, is found in this same constitution of Courboing. It commissions the directors to appoint one of the members "associate servant of the said confraternity." His ordinary duty was to assemble the directors and the members for the meetings. His term of office was of two years' duration. The constitution continues: "And in the event that it be necessary to send him into the country or to employ more than two hours of time in behalf of the said confraternity, the said directors

[24] *Lett.*, i., 49, No. 36, to Mlle. le Gras, Oct. 17, 1631.
[25] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 420.

shall give him some of its [the confraternity's] deniers if he is poor and wishes it."[26]

But there are a number of instances on record where the members of various associations procured the assistance of non-members and paid them for their services in behalf of the needy. In the first place the poor women whom the confraternities chose to remain with the bedridden sick were to be paid "an honest salary according to their labor" "from the common funds of the association."[27] Abelly tells us that the wet nurses who cared for the foundlings were "paid each month the salary which" was "agreed upon with them."[28] St. Vincent instructs a member of the Congregation to make a bargain with a certain surgeon "to visit and attend the sick who have need of it every two days."[29] The wording of these instructions seems to imply that the surgeon in question was to be paid for his services. St. Vincent himself was assigned an annual salary of 600 livres as royal almoner of the galleys of France by Louis XIII (1619).[30] The priests, procured for the spiritual care of the poor of the Hôtel-Dieu through the intervention of St. Vincent and the Ladies of Charity, received a definite annual salary for their services from the Ladies.[31] Again through the intervention of St. Vincent and some of the Ladies, the ecclesiastics of Saint-Nicholas-du-Chardonnet were given "300 livres of rent" to provide for the spiritual needs of the sick in the hospital for galley slaves which was situated within the limits of their parish.[32]

In the light of the evidence adduced, it is indisputable that St. Vincent preferred volunteer service in welfare work and made use of it whenever possible. Still he was not opposed on principle to paid service and employed it when necessity demanded. Persons who gave all or a considerable

[26] *Ibid.*, There is, however, no mention made that the work for which he received pay was specifically social service.

[27] *Ibid.*, 389, 424.

[28] Abelly, i., 211.

[29] *Lett.*, ii., 498, No. 920, To Frère Sené, Cleric of the Mission at Lagny, Nov. 24, 1652.

[30] Abelly, i., *Pièces Justificatives*, I., 405.

[31] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 473; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 74.

[32] Abelly, i., 190.

part of their time to work for the poor were, to his mind, entitled to a reasonable compensation if they themselves were poor and had no other source of revenue. Nor does he seem to have thought that a definite salary commercializes social service, if accompanied with love for the poor, any more than it commercializes the services of ecclesiastics for the relief of the spiritual needs of the same poor.

2. *The Nurse*

A. *The Nurse and the Patient*

The rules and constitutions of St. Vincent say nothing definite regarding the number of patients to be placed under the care of each nurse.[33] But he advised the two Daughters of Charity who were sent to Arras as visiting nurses in 1656 not to "take charge of many sick at a time; only eight or ten suffice."[34] Still we learn from another conference that as many as thirty were cared for at one time.[35]

St. Vincent instructs his nurses[36] to treat their patients "with compassion, kindness, cordiality, respect, and devotion, even the most troublesome as also those toward whom they will feel some repugnance, . . . considering that it is not so much to them as to Jesus Christ that they render service." You ought to listen "to their little complaints," he continues, "as a good mother would do, for they look upon you as their foster mothers, as persons sent to assist them."[37]

[33] The constitution for the confraternity of the parish of Saint-Sauveur is the only one that makes mention of the point, and it says merely in general terms that "the superioress has charge of all the sick whom she can go to see by the order of the physician." *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 453.

[34] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 189-90, No. 68, Aug. 30, 1656.

[35] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 315, No. 79, Nov. 11, 1657. It is not stated here, however, how many Daughters of Charity were in attendance, but apparently there was only one. In his conference of Sept. 29, 1655, he contrasts the relative number of nurses and patients in certain institutions with the large number of patients cared for by the comparatively few Daughters of Charity, and says that a single parish gives them "twenty, thirty, and forty, and sometimes sixty" patients (*Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 242, No. 13). Here again the number of Daughters in attendance is not stated, but we know that two was the ordinary number employed in each parish.

[36] These instructions were given primarily to the Daughters of Charity, but they manifest St. Vincent's mind on the subject and apply with equal force to all who were engaged in nursing under his direction.

[37] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 311-2, *Règles Communes*, ch. vii., art. 1.

"Encourage them to suffer their ills patiently for the love of God," he tells them again; "bear with their little whims, never become vexed with them nor speak rough words to them. Ah, they have enough to do to suffer their illness! Think, on the contrary, that you are their visible guardian angel, their father and their mother; do not contradict them except in what is harmful to them. . . . God has instituted you to be their consolation."[38]

The following words of St. Vincent, taken from one of his conferences, are also well worthy of note as expressive of the general attitude of the nurse toward her patient: "Your resolutions ought therefore to be: I shall go out to serve the poor. I shall try to go with a mien modestly gay, I shall endeavor to console them and edify them, I shall speak to them as to my masters. There are some who are accustomed to speak roughly to me, I shall bear with it. . . ."[39]

Among the rules he drew up for those whom he sent to serve the sick in the parishes, we find the following article: "Although they ought not be too yielding nor too condescending when they [the sick] refuse to take the remedies, still they shall be well on their guard not to ill-treat or slight them; on the contrary, they shall treat them with respect and humility, bearing in mind that the rudeness and the contempt one shows them, as well as the service and the honor which one renders them, are directed to our Lord Himself."[40]

St. Vincent demanded the same cordiality and condescension of the Ladies of Charity on their visits to the sick of the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris. They were instructed "to conduct themselves with great humility, meekness and affability toward the poor sick, speaking to them in a familiar and cordial manner in order to gain them the more easily for God." This condescension was not restricted to manner and words. He gave them the further instructions "to dress as simply as possible on the days on which they went to

[38] *Ibid.*, i., 5-6, No. 1, July 31, 1634.
[39] *Ibid.*, 30, No. 4, Aug. 12, 1640.
[40] *Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses,* ch. xi., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 616, No. 105, Oct. 19, 1659.

the Hôtel-Dieu, in order to appear poor with the poor, or at least far removed from vanity and luxury of dress, in order not to cause pain to these poor sick, who, seeing the excess and the superfluities of the rich, ordinarily grieve the more on that account that they have for themselves not even the things that are necessary for them."[41]

Affability in nursing and visiting the sick, was, however, to be accompanied with a modest reserve. We shall adduce but one instance in proof. St. Vincent was asked how the Daughters of Charity, who were to be sent to nurse the wounded soldiers, should behave toward the convalescent. "O my Sisters," he answered, "it is necessary that this be always with great charity and modesty; for, since they are no longer sick, it is necessary to be on one's guard as one must do with all other men. If it should happen that one of them becomes so insolent, it would be necessary to reprehend him in a severe manner; if it should happen again, you must threaten to register a complaint against him, and also never to hear from them except what is necessary for their welfare, performing quickly the service you must render them."[42]

The nurses were also instructed to be very attentive in caring for the wants of the sick. "Be then very attentive," he tells them, "that nothing be wanting to them in all that you can [provide], whether it be for the health of the body or for the salvation of the soul."[43] "They shall be very conscientious," he says in his rules for them, "not to let them suffer in default of giving them precisely at the proper time and in the proper manner the assistance of which they have need, be it through negligence or culpable forgetfulness, be it because of some badly regulated attachment to their spiritual exercises, which they ought to postpone in favor of the necessary assistance of the poor sick."[44]

St. Vincent did not allow his first Daughters of Charity to nurse patients indiscriminately. "And since ill-regulated charity," he says further in their rule, "is not only dis-

[41] Abelly, i., 201; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 469.
[42] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 169-70, No. 66, July 29, 1656.
[43] *Ibid.*, i., 56, No. 8, July 14, 1642.
[44] *Règles Communes*, ch. vii., art 1.

pleasing to God, but also prejudicial to the souls of those who practice it thus, they shall not undertake to nurse or to physic any sick person against the will of those on whom they depend, nor against the order which has been given them, paying no attention to the complaints which the discontented poor are accustomed to make." This article, as St. Vincent himself explains it, contains the prohibition "to receive a sick person against the order of the Ladies of Charity or of the physician."[45]

Furthermore, St. Vincent discriminated against those who were afflicted with a lingering illness and against the incurables. "It has not been the intention," he tells his Daughters of Charity, "that one receive . . . those affected with dropsy, the consumptives, the epileptics; for what would one do if one received all these persons? . . . In Paris God has provided them with a hospital for the incurables."[46] In his constitution for the confraternity of the parish of Saint-Saveur at Paris he likewise excludes those suffering from a lingering illness from the benefits of visiting nursing. To care for them," he says, "would cause . . . that one could not bring relief to many others."[47]

We find another restriction among the rules which St. Vincent gave to his first Daughters of Charity whom he sent into the parishes. We read: "In order to avoid serious objections that might arise, they shall not undertake to sit up with the sick, nor with women who are laboring with child, any more than to assist women of a bad life . . . and, although a special case of extraordinary necessity seems to oblige them to serve someone of these three classes of persons, still they shall not undertake it without a general or special permission of their superiors and without an express order of the superioress of the confraternity; with all this they shall not render them service, as far as possible, except through the mediation of some other person, and they shall not give knowledge of it, except to their superiors."[48] There

[45] Ch. vii., art. 3, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 318-9.

[46] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 319, No. 79, Nov. 11, 1657. *Cf.* also *Lett.*, i., 312, No. 289, To Mlle. le Gras (1640).

[47] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 452.

[48] *Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses,* ch xiii., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 619-20, No. 105, Oct. 19, 1659.

is no evidence to show to what extent St. Vincent adopted this policy toward the other social workers who labored under his direction.

B. *The Nurse and the Physician*

The relation between the nurse and the physician was, according to St. Vincent, one of strict obedience on the part of the former. He expresses this attitude very clearly in his rules for the Daughters of Charity destined for service in the parishes. Among them we find the following: "They shall make it a matter of conscience not to fail in the slightest service which they ought to render to the sick, particularly as regards the remedies which they ought to give to them in the manner and at the hour prescribed by the physician, unless some great necessity obliges to use it otherwise; as, for example, if their illness should become too bad, or if they were in a cold fit or in a sweat or some other like plight." Vincent himself gives us the import of this rule. He says: "Thus, my Sisters, you ought to be exact in doing all that the physicians prescribe, because if any accident happened to a sick person, you would be responsible, unless, as we have already said, some very remarkable change comes unexpectedly and such as those of which this rule speaks. Since I come to mention the physicians, I shall add that, besides the obedience you owe them, you must also show them great respect . . .; for, if it should happen, as I have been told, that anyone [of you] had the intention of following her own judgment, or of doing something contrary to their intention, or of exceeding the orders she received, I should say to this Daughter that she committed a great fault. You ought, then, to obey them in all that concerns the service of the sick and think that you are doing the will of God in doing theirs."[49]

That St. Vincent here gives expression to a settled conviction is apparent from the fact that already many years earlier he gave similar instructions to his Daughters of Charity. In a conference dated June 14, 1642, we read:

[49] *Règles Particulières aux Soeurs de Paroisses,* ch. ix., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 614, Aug. 24, 1659.

"You ought to act in a similar manner [showing honor, respect, and obedience] towards the physicians, being well on your guard not to find fault with their orders, which you ought to carry out with exactitude and without ever taking the liberty of making the medicines according to your way of seeing, but executing exactly what they have prescribed as regards both the quantity and the drugs, for sometimes there is nothing less than the lives of the persons at stake." "Respect, then, the physicians," he continues, "not only because they are above you and better instructed than you, but also because God commands you to do so in the Sacred Scriptures, where one reads the following words: 'Honor the physicians for the need thou hast of them. The kings themselves, as well as all the great ones of the world, honor them.'[50] Why, then, my Daughters, under the pretext that they are familiar with you, that they speak freely with you, should you refuse to show them the honor and the respect you owe them? Ah! be on your guard here, I pray you; for, although it seems to you at times that this one does not do as well as the other, never take occasion from this to undervalue them. It is but ignorance that can hinder you from knowing why they follow several methods in the treatment of sicknesses that seem to be the same."[51]

In view of the great respect St. Vincent here evinces for the medical profession, it is interesting to note some of his deeds and words which are to some extent in opposition. Two years before his death he suffered severely from an affection of the eyes. After trying a number of remedies without relief, the physician ordered that he apply the blood of a newly killed pigeon. Vincent never allowed a pigeon to be killed for this purpose, "saying that this innocent animal represented to him his Savior and that God well knew

[50] Adaptation of Eccli. 38, 1-3.

[51] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char., i.,* 55, No. 8, June 14, 1642. For similar statements on the same point, *cf., v.g., Ibid.,* 193, No. 19, Jan. 29, 1645; *Règles Communes,* ch. iv., art 4, *Ibid.,* ii., 346, No. 81, Dec. 2, 1657; *Ibid.,* 351, No. 81, Dec. 2, 1657. St. Vincent endeavored to inculcate in the Priests of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity the same respect and obedience towards the physicians in the care of their own health. *Cf. v.g., Lett.,* ii., 85, No. 593, To M. Martin, Confrère at Genoa, May 15, 1648; *Règles Communes,* ch. iv., art. 4, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 346, No. 81, Dec. 2, 1657.

how to cure him in another way."[52] In his last weakness he was ordered by the physician to take some broth and some chicken. He did so once or twice and discontinued, saying it was hard on his heart. He writes thus to one of the brethren: "One must not pay so much attention to the advice of the physicians who are only too obliging and who do not regard any other good but the health of the body."[53]

[52] Abelly, i., 353.
[53] *Lett.*, iii., 677, No 1549, To M. Get, Supr. at Marseilles, Nov. 23, 1657.

CHAPTER VI

Relief

1. *The General Nature of Relief*

Only the helpless poor could receive charitable support according to the relief programme of St. Vincent. The totally dependent—little children, the sick, the crippled, and the decrepit—were to be supported entirely from charity; the partially disabled, in proportion to their inability. "And as regards those who can earn but a portion of what is necessary for them, the association shall supply the rest." These are the instructions we find in the constitutions of several of the conferences.[1]

St. Vincent personally or through his workers gave relief of every kind: personal service, medicines, eatables, clothes, tools and implements, seeds, and money. In fact, he suited the relief to the nature of the individual needs.

He frequently gave alms in money. But we cannot detect by what principle, if any, he was guided in determining when relief should be given in money and when in kind. We have evidence of any one instance where the distinction was sharply made. The missionaries who were relieving distress at Nancy gave the poor of the middle class "a certain amount of bread per week," while the poor "persons of rank, both ecclesiastical and lay," were given "a sum of money per month according to the condition and the needs of each."[2]

St. Vincent had no technical standard of living as a norm in giving relief. Necessity was his sole guide.[3] The

[1] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 412-3, 418, 430.

[2] Abelly, ii., 490-1.

[3] *Ce qui leur sera nécessaire pour vivre (Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 412, 418), and *ce qu'il leur faudra pour vivre* (*Ibid.*, 430), are the norms he gives in his constitutions. He sometimes specifies the amount to be given; *v.g.*, "to each poor person who cannot work, one livre and a half of bread per day and a piece of cheese or butter; and to those who earn a part of their living, . . . six or eight livres of bread per week" (*Ibid.*, 419). He writes thus to one of the brethren: "If you judge that it is not enough to give five sous per week to the poor, you can give them as high as two sous per day (*Lett.*, i., 532, 5°, No. 461, To M. Dufour, Confrère at Saintes, July 4, 1646).

question of comforts and luxuries did not enter into his calculations. Only individuals and families in actual need were the objects of his care. As soon as they rose above this condition in virtue of assistance rendered or by dint of personal effort, they passed out of the sphere of his activity.

He gives us a clear manifestation of his mind on this point in his conduct towards his parents and other relatives. They were poor peasants living from hand to mouth, but ordinarily able to avoid actual need. St. Vincent steadfastly refused to afford them the means of enjoying comforts and of rising to a higher standard of life while so many others throughout France were suffering need. "I went so far as to tell them," he once said, "that they need expect nothing from me, and that if I had chests of gold and silver I should give them none of it, because an ecclesiastic who possesses anything owes it to God and to the poor."[4] Some persons of prominence, out of consideration for St. Vincent, proposed to offer some of his nephews means and opportunity of studying and of rising to a higher station in life. St. Vincent objected, saying that one must be cautious not to frustrate the designs of God in their regard, and that he preferred to have them "retain the social status of their father, since the life of a laborer is one of the most innocent and one in which it is easiest to work out one's salvation."[5] He told his parents to pray to God for contentment in their lowly state and for the grace to transmit their poverty to their children as a heritage.

One of his nephews traveled to Paris with the express purpose of obtaining assistance from Vincent which would enable him to enjoy the comforts of life. St. Vincent received him kindly but sent him back on foot, as he had come, giving him only ten crowns for the journey of about 180 leagues. And this money was not taken from the charity fund but requested for the purpose from a noble lady.

An intimate friend once offered him a thousand francs

[4] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 433, No. 104, May 2, 1659. This statement is especially significant when we recall to mind that Jean de Paul, in allowing the young Vincent to study for the ecclesiastical state, entertained the hope of future compensation.

[5] Abelly, iii., 401-2.

for his parents. Vincent accepted it, but obtained the benefactor's permission to use it, not for their temporal welfare, but to defray the expenses of a mission in their district. While awaiting an occasion to send missionaries thither, however, his relatives were deprived of the little they had by the raiding soldiers. St. Vincent consulted some of his confrères and, with their advice, forwarded the money to the Canon of Dax, leaving its distribution entirely to his judgment, asking only that the effort be made to place his relatives again in a position to earn their own livelihood.

The absence of family standards and family budgets in St. Vincent's programme of relief causes us little wonderment when we consider the time and circumstances of his labors. In the first place, the general standard of living was lower than at present, especially among the poorer classes. Moreover, in the midst of the turmoils, general poverty, and distress of the first half of the seventeenth century, the lower classes had neither hope nor desire of improving their standards. They were happy to be assured of the bare necessaries of life. Finally, we must bear in mind that St. Vincent was not a man of theory. The purpose of his social activities was not to raise the standard of living among any particular social class, but only to relieve and prevent actual distress.

2. *The Obligation of Earning One's Livelihood*

St. Vincent's untiring and habitual diligence did not spring from his assiduous nature. It was deeply rooted in the conscious obligation of earning his livelihood. We have his own testimony. He said one day to his brethren: "We ought always to think when we go to the refectory: Have I earned the food I am about to take? I often have this thought which throws me into confusion: Wretch, have you earned the bread which you go to eat, this bread which comes from the work of the poor?"[6]

He repeatedly adverts to this obligation in his conferences to his Daughters of Charity. We read in one of them: "God had given an express command to man to earn his

[6] *Avis et Conférences aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 99, No. 42, July 2, 1655.

bread in the sweat of his brow. *'In sudore vultus tui vesceris pane.'*[7] . . . This obligation is general, and there is no one who can claim exemption. . . . We read in Holy Scripture that the just shall live from the work of his hands, the Holy Ghost giving us to understand thereby that the greatest obligation of man, after that which he owes to God, is to work to earn his living."[8] In the course of the same conference he said further: "Oh, how I should desire that one day you would be in a position to serve at your own expense the villages which have not the means of engaging you! I see nothing more beautiful," he continues, "than to behold the Daughters in a district serving the poor and instructing the sick without anyone contributing to it, and this through the work of the Sisters who would be in other districts, as well as through their own work, according as the time would permit after having acquitted themselves of their usual occupations."

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that this sense of the obligation of work had its influence also on St. Vincent's social activities. The whole purpose of the discrimination he insisted on in his relief work, was to force the able-bodied poor to earn their living by honest labor wherever possible. The men were instructed as part of their relief work to place boys as apprentices in trades "as soon as they were of competent age." He drafted a special constitution for a conference whose partial purpose was to provide industrial training for poor boys in a factory set aside for that work.[9] Thus were the young to learn at an early age the duty of self-support. The programme of Mâcon prohibited public begging under the penalty of punishment of being forbidden all further aid. The necessaries of life were given in the provinces only to the disabled.

[7] "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." Gen. 3.19.

[8] The words, which have a general application, are but a quotation from an entire conference which Vincent gave his Daughters on "the importance of the Daughters of Charity occupying themselves with some work during their hours of relaxation, after having fulfilled their obligations both in the service of the sick and in their schools, and this in order to gain a part of their livelihood" (*Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 419 sqq., No. 37, Nov. 28, 1649). The work with which St. Vincent wished them to occupy themselves during these hours was, as we learn elsewhere, sewing or spinning (*Ibid.*, 54, No. 8, June 14, 1642).

[9] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 412, 418, 427-33.

St. Vincent's entire attitude towards work is an implicit condemnation of professional begging. In fact, the whole complex of his social activities tended towards its elimination. It is true, he himself fed beggars at the door of Saint-Lazare, but as soon as the state had provided for them through the General Poor House, he discontinued, with the exception of a severe winter which reduced many to extreme misery.

3. *Rehabilitation*

That the able-bodied poor, on the one hand, might not be forced into the ranks of the professional beggars, and the community, on the other, might be spared the burden of supporting them in charity, St. Vincent believed in furnishing them with the means of earning their own living.

He followed this policy in the first place towards his relatives, who had been reduced to begging by the soldiery. He sent 1000 livres to the canon of his native town, leaving the distribution entirely to him, recommending only that he try to put Vincent's relatives in a position to earn their living. This the canon did, "buying for the one a yoke of oxen . . .; having the little dwelling of another restored; redeeming for another a little plot of land; and giving implements and clothes to the others, that they might work."[10]

But it is especially in the relief of the provinces that we see Vincent de Paul employing this method. One of the missionaries had written to St. Vincent asking whether he should distribute alms also to the poor who were able to work. Without waiting to consult the Ladies how they wished to have their alms employed, Vincent answered as a general principle that "when anyone has sufficient strength to work, one buys him some tools conformable to his profession and gives him nothing more. According to this," he continues, "the alms are not for those who are capable of working on the fortifications or of doing anything else."[11] In another letter he instructs a member of the Company to apply an alms as he considers best, "whether it be for the

[10] Abelly, iii., 400-1.

[11] *Lett.*, ii., 330, No. 789, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, April 26, 1651.

assistance of the parish priests or for the purchase of wheat . . . to sow, in order that the poor laborers may be able to maintain themselves during the winter."[12] He writes again to the same brother: "You are requested also to aid the poor people to earn their living at this time by giving them some implements that they may work in the harvest."[13] Finally, he writes: "I have nothing to say [regarding your work] . . . except that you can continue to provide . . . that a portion [of the alms] be destined to aid the poor people to sow a little plot of ground. . . . It is also desirable to see to it that all the other poor people who possess no land, earn their living (both men and women), by giving to the men some implements to work and the girls and women spinning wheels and tow or wool to spin, and that to the most destitute only."[14]

The reports emanating from the provinces in the form of letters to St. Vincent give evidence that the above instructions of the Saint were carried out. One of these letters says in part: "We have considered ourselves obliged to give them [the able-bodied poor] the means [of gaining their living] by distributing among them axes, bills, and spinning wheels, in order to have the men and women work who will no longer be a burden to anyone, unless something else happens to reduce them to the same misery. . . . We have also distributed the grain which has been sent from Paris to these regions. It has been sown and God gives it His blessing." Another one says: "We have purchased with your alms 700 livres worth of sickles, flails, fans, and other implements in order to aid the poor in earning their living by working in the harvest." And again: "We have distributed to the women spinning wheels and some hemp to keep them busy."[15]

These general statements constitute all the evidence that has come down to us concerning this phase of St. Vincent's work. But they suffice to give us a clear insight into Vincent's mind. The able-bodied poor are not to be charges

[12] *Lett.*, iii., 532, No. 1445, To Jean Parre at Saint-Quentin, Aug. 18, 1657.
[13] *Lett.*, iv., 402, No. 1886, July 12, 1659.
[14] *Ibid.*, 436, No. 1913, Aug. 9, 1659.
[15] Cited in Abelly, ii., 519, 521.

of charity. They must be put in a condition to earn their own living. If they are landholders they must be given seeds and implements with which to till their land. If they possess no land, they must be given tools with which to earn their living by hiring themselves to others. The women are to be furnished with the means of occupying themselves with work suitable to them.

4. *Institutional vs. Home Care*

St. Vincent's preferences were decidedly in favor of rendering assistance to the poor and sick in their homes. His confraternities of charity were the first of his aid-giving agencies in the order of the time and the most widespread. But to visit the needy poor in their homes, to provide nursing and the necessaries of life for them there, was the prime purpose of these associations.

This method was not merely a matter of expediency with St. Vincent. He was convinced of its advantages over institutional care. In one of his conferences to his Daughters of Charity, we read: "Certainly a Company such as yours which is destined for works so excellent, so agreeable to our Lord and so useful to fellow man, can have no other author but God Himself; for until then [the foundation of the Daughters of Charity] did one hear of such a work? One saw, indeed, religious men and hospitals for the assistance of the sick, there were also religious women who were consecrated to God to serve them in the hospitals; but until you came, there was not found a community which dedicated itself to the service of the sick in their homes; and if in a poor family anyone fell sick, he was sent to the hospital, and thus were separated the husband from his wife and the children from their father and mother. Until then, O my God, Thou didst not furnish means of going to assist them in their homes, and it seemed in some manner that Thy adorable providence, which fails no one, did not extend its care to them."[16]

[16] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 211, No. 21, Feb. 13, 1646. Before St. Vincent's time some provisions were made for the care of the sick in their homes. Many of the hospitals distributed medicines to the poor sick and visited them in their homes. In other places, charitable lay organizations performed this labor of love. *Cf., v.g.,* Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part ii., pp. 299 sqq.

The Duchess of Liancourt, one of St. Vincent's zealous coöperators, planned the erection of a hospital for the poor at Liancourt. Vincent opposed the plan, saying it were better to provide means of having the Ladies and Daughters of Charity attend them in their homes.[17]

Such care, we are assured by Abelly, was also the preference of the people at that time. He says: "If one were to ask, for example, fifty or sixty poor sick, who are being assisted in a parish of Paris through the care and at the expense of the conference that is established there, if they preferred to be taken to the Hôtel-Dieu, they undoubtedly would answer unanimously that one would do them better service by leaving them in their poor lodgings and continuing towards them this charitable assistance which one has commenced to give them."[18]

Institutional care, however, was not excluded from the relief programme of St. Vincent. Some classes of the needy could best be cared for in institutions, and St. Vincent had them cared for there. The establishment of the Old Folks' Home *(l'Hôpital du Nom-du-Jésus)*, for example, was entirely his own choice. This in turn gave occasion for the erection of the *Hôpital-Général,* which St. Vincent also heartily approved in principle though not in method. Moreover, his constitution for industrial training presupposes that the boys live in the institution. His care for the foundlings was also partly institutional.

[17] Goyau, 70.
[18] Abelly, ii., 436.

SECTION III

The Methods of St. Vincent de Paul in Social Service

The following pages are devoted to the exposition of the various phases of St. Vincent's social relief work.[1] I shall endeavor to present them more from the methodical than the historical point of view. And since they are but the materialization of his ideas and principles which we have considered in the first two sections, a certain amount of repetition and cross references is inevitable.

[1] His work among the Christian slaves of northern Africa as well as his home and foreign mission activities are here omitted, the former as having no practical bearing on modern social problems, the latter as being outside the scope of the present work.

CHAPTER I

The Care of the Sick and the Insane

1. *Visiting Nursing*

The social workers whom St. Vincent organized and directed in the field of visiting nursing were of two classes: those who volunteered only their leisure time, retaining their social status and fulfilling their wonted domestic obligations, and those who devoted their full time to the service of the poor sick, adopting it as their life's work.

A. *The Confraternities of the Towns and Villages.*

St. Vincent's initial step in organized charity is marked by the establishment of an association of visiting nurses whose members were of the former type. (See p. 103.) It became one of Vincent's most successful and widespread works. With slight modifications to meet local conditions, it was soon spread throughout France and to other countries, as Poland and Italy. It usually formed a complement to the missions conducted by the Priests of the Mission in the country parishes.[2]

Each member of the confraternity had her day on duty.[3] The president began and the rest followed in the order of their reception. In case of sickness the respective member was dispensed from duty upon informing the president, and

[2] What has been said in the foregoing section under the headings of Organization, Meetings, and Funds, concerning the officers, their election, term of office and duties; concerning the admission of the sick to the care of the confraternity and their dismissal; and concerning the meetings, the discussion of current difficulties, and the sources of revenue, applies pre-eminently to the association at present under consideration.

[3] The details for this paragraph are taken from the following constitutions: *Règlement de la Confrérie de la Charité de Châtillon-les-Dombes,* Nov. 24, 1617, *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* pp. 387-402; *Règlement des Divers Offices de la Confrérie de la Charité, Ibid.,* 402-8; *Règlement de la Confrérie de la Charité d'Hommes et de Femmes,* Courboing, June 19, 1622, *Ibid.,* 417-27; *Constitution for the Union of a Conference of Charity and a Society of the Holy Name, Lett.,* i., 19 sqq.

the next in order continued. If, however, she was prevented from serving on her regular day for some other reason, she had to find a substitute obliging herself to this substitute to return the favor under similar circumstances.

She who had been on duty for the day notified the next in order in the evening, "telling her the name, the place, the number, and the condition of the sick" and bringing her "the slices of bread, the wine and the meat," or allowing her to procure the necessary food directly from the treasurer or custodian of the wardrobe.

The quantity and the quality of the food to be furnished to the sick poor by the confraternity were very minutely determined by the regulations. Each invalid was to be given as much bread as he was able to eat, a small measure of wine for each meal if he had no fever, a bowl of soup or porridge, four or five ounces of veal or boiled mutton for dinner and the same for supper except, as one constitution says, that the meat be roasted or minced, or as another prescribes, that it be minced for supper twice or three times a week. This latter constitution also permits that boiled chicken be given the sick on Sundays and feast days.

On days of abstinence, the sick were to receive two eggs and a little butter in the morning with a bowl of porridge or soup or fresh fish. The same amount was served in the evening. The constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes, however, allows for supper as many eggs as the sick desire, and limits the serving of fish to the evening meal when they "can be had at a reasonable price."

Special provision was made for those who were too weak and feeble to eat solid food. They were to be given broths and fresh eggs or bread soup and hulled barley three or four times a day according to the orders of the physician to the president. One constitution also urges that permission be obtained to allow those who are very sick to eat meat "during Lent and on other forbidden days."

No one could be admitted to the care of the confraternity except with the consent of the rector or president and at least one of the other officers. If a sick person had been thus favorably voted upon, the president informed her who was on duty for the day. The latter took charge of the case

at once and went to see her patient. Her first duty was to supply clean clothes, if necessary, from the chest of the confraternity. "This done," continues the constitution of Châtillon-les-Dombes, "she shall have him go to Confession in preparation for Communion on the morrow," and shall place a crucifix in position where he can see it. She shall then bring "the utensils that will be necessary for him, such as a small table, a napkin, a gondola, a porringer, a plate, a spoon." These she evidently gets from the custodian of the wardrobe. Thereupon she shall notify her who will be on duty the following day that she may "clean and prepare the house of the sick person," putting it in readiness for the Blessed Sacrament which is to be brought in the morning.

The constitutions give no further instructions of "first aid," but proceed to trace out the daily routine of the visiting nurse. She was to prepare the food at home and bring it to the sick at about nine or ten o'clock in the morning, "the soup and the meat in a kettle, the bread in a white napkin, and the wine in a bottle, doing the same for supper about four o'clock in the evening."

Entering the room of the invalid, so continue the constitution of Châtillon and the instructions for the different offices, "she shall greet him gayly and kindly," then "approaching his bed with a mien modestly cheerful," she "shall raise the pillow for him, arrange the covers, place the small table near the bed, and on it arrange the napkin, the plate [and] the spoon, [and]rinse the gondola." "She shall wash the hands of the sick, say the *Benedicite,* pour out the porridge in a porringer and put the meat in a plate, arranging all on the said small table; then she shall kindly invite the sick person to eat for the love of Jesus and of His holy Mother: all with love as though she were treating her child, or rather God, Who considers done to Himself the good she does to this poor person, and she shall say to him some little word" of "holy joy and consolation for the purpose of cheering him." She "shall cut the meat into morsels . . ., pour out the drink, [and] invite him anew to eat." "Having thus set things going, if there is someone at hand [to continue], she shall leave him and go to find another whom she

shall treat in like manner." If, however, there is no one to continue the work, she remains and "when he [the patient] has finished eating, having washed the dishes, folded the napkin and removed the table," she "shall say grace for the sick and take leave of him immediately in order to go and serve another."

The same order was to be observed in making the rounds in the afternoon. The visiting lady is very considerately admonished in the constitution of Châtillon "always to begin with him who has someone with him and finish with those who are alone, in order to be able to remain longer with the latter."

Moreover, the confraternity had its two "guards of the poor sick," non-members chosen by the ladies of the confraternity to remain with those who stood in need of constant attention and who had no one else to assist them. They acted under the orders of the president and were paid for their services.

A further duty of the visiting nurse was to try to dispose those whom she assisted to lead a more Christian life and to prepare the dying for death.[4]

In order that the members of the confraternity might "practice in their entirety and with edification the corporal and spiritual works of mercy," they were to "have the dead buried at the expense of the confraternity." The regulations obliged them to "furnish the shrouds for the deceased poor who have none," to have the grave dug, if the deceased had "no provision made elsewhere, or if the rector of the hospital" did not provide for it as he had "to be asked to do." They were further instructed to "attend in a body the funeral of the poor sick whom they have assisted," if they could "conveniently do so, taking in this regard the place of mothers who accompany their children to the grave." Even with the grave their duties towards the poor sick did not cease; they were instructed to "have a Low Mass said for the repose of their souls."

It is striking that St. Vincent, otherwise so given to de-

[4] For further details on the spiritual care of the sick, as also on the spiritual exercises demanded of the nurse, *cf.* The Supernatural in Social Service in the preceding chapter.

tails in these instructions, is practically silent on the subject of medical care. Still we know from a few scattered statements that medical care was given by the women of these confraternities. Two of the constitutions that have been studied for this work state in general terms that the purpose of the confraternity is, among other things, to administer to the sick "the necessary medicaments" during the period of their illnesses. Moreover, we know that it was St. Vincent's endeavor to establish these confraternities in towns and villages where there were no hospitals. And again, we are told that St. Vincent's rules for the relief work at Mâcon prescribed "that the bashful poor of the town be assisted in their illnesses and provided with the proper remedies as in the other places where the conference was established."[5] "To prepare the remedies" is enumerated by Abelly among "the necessary and usual assistances" rendered by the conferences to the sick. The same author tells us again that Mlle. le Gras took "drugs to compound the remedies" with her when she visited these confraternities and that she instructed the women in the care of the sick.[6]

B. *The Ladies of the Parishes*

A number of Parisian ladies had seen the marvelous results of St. Vincent's confraternities in the towns and villages where they had their country villas. They conceived the idea of offering the same benefits to the poor sick of the capital. Here there was always a large number of families of workers and artisans who lived daily from hand to mouth. When the bread winner fell sick and, as frequently happened, either through shame or for other reasons did not wish to be taken to the hospital, the family was in great distress. These the Ladies resolved to assist. They accordingly spoke to the pastors of various parishes on the subject. The priests heartily approved of the plan and requested St. Vincent to establish his work in their parishes. The first establishment was made in the parish of St. Saveur.[7] Identical establishments soon sprang up in most of the

[5] Abelly, i., 98.
[6] *Ibid.*, 160, 166.
[7] *Règlement de la Confrérie de Charité de Paroisse de Saint-Saveur*, 1629, *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 452-4.

parishes of Paris and also in many other cities of the realm and even in foreign countries.

St. Vincent here found himself confronted with a novel situation. Those whom he had thus far organized and directed in the field of charity were for the most part women accustomed to the performance of the ordinary household duties and hence both desirous and capable of rendering personal service to the sick. But those now seeking direction were mostly society women. Vincent, therefore, drew up an entirely new set of regulations. He traced out merely the broad lines along which they were to work, leaving the details to their own interest and enthusiasm and to the initiative of the individual parish priests at whose request he compiled these regulations.

The officers were three in number and elected by the vote of the members as in the other confraternities. Nothing is said concerning the duration of their term of office. The superioress was entrusted with the general direction of the association. The treasurer had the care of the money and of the receipts of the special collections taken up at the church on Sundays by the women and not by the young ladies. The custodian of the wardrobe kept "the mattresses, sheets, covers, shirts, and other commodities necessary for the sick." She also was instructed "to loan them to the said sick and to get them back, so that nothing be lost." The three officers could "do nothing without mutual consultation."

Each member was allotted her charges. The superioress had the care of as many sick as she could "go to see at the order of the physician." They were instructed to go two and two, never alone, and to visit the sick twice a week, while the ecclesiastic at the head of the association was to do so every day.

Before the Ladies took a case in hand the physician was to visit the sick person and order the necessaries as regards both the medicines and the bleeding. This order was brought to the superioress for her to sign. She then admitted the sick person to the care of the confraternity if she learned "from the prompt investigation" which she made that the person was otherwise admissible, i. e., "if he had been a member of the parish for at least three months and was not

afflicted with a lingering disease." The care of the latter class of invalids would hinder the Ladies in the relief of others.

Moreover, the physician had to send the superioress a certificate testifying that the patient could be visited without danger of infection. If he had not studied the case sufficiently to make this statement, he merely gave a prescription to send to the sick such nourishment as he deemed necessary.

This constitution distinguishes itself from those of the towns and villages by the prominence given to the physician and also by the fact that no mention is made either of the food to be given to the sick or of the manner of serving it.

Another important distinction consisted in the fact that, while the food was furnished by the confraternity in the towns and villages, it was given by the Ladies themselves in Paris. Abelly says on this point: "It was at their expense that one prepared at their homes the soups, the meats, and other things necessary for the nourishment of the poor sick of the parish; this they did one after the other and each on her day."[8]

As has been seen, the Ladies were required by the regulations to go in person to relieve the sick in their homes. It was on this point that the association broke down already during the first year. Some of the Ladies, in spite of their good will, had underestimated the difficulties, and as the work multiplied, proved unequal to "the low, laborious services" exacted of them; others were hampered by their own domestic duties and social obligations; others were hindered by their husbands or parents; while still others who had entered the work, attracted by its novelty and not actuated with love for the poor, became negligent and careless. They began sending their servants in their stead. These frequently lacked both skill and love for the work and in consequence proved unsatisfactory. This occasioned the foundation of the Daughters of Charity.[9]

[8] Abelly, ii., 439.

[9] *Lett.*, i., 108, No. 101. To Mlle. le Gras, July 21, 1635; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 181, No. 18. Jan. 22, 1645; *Ibid.*, 210, No. 21, Feb. 13, 1646; *Ibid.*, 395, No. 35, Dec. 22, 1648; *Ibid.*, 530, No. 45, Feb. 24, 1653; *Ibid.*, ii., 91, No. 61, Aug. 1 and 8, 1655.

C. *The Ladies of l'Hôtel-Dieu*

In the early months of 1634 circumstances led St. Vincent to organize a third type of visiting nurses. They were destined to visit the sick, not in their homes as the two previous confraternities were doing, but in the Hôtel-Dieu at Paris. This confraternity, important from the beginning on account of the number and the social prominence of its members, attained still greater importance in the sequel by the variety and vastness of its activities. The credit of conceiving the idea is due to Mme. Goussault. She had frequently visited the Hôtel-Dieu and had seen that the sick were not being properly cared for.

The spiritual affairs of the hospital were administered by the chapter of Nôtre-Dame, or rather by a delegate of the chapter, and the temporal matters by the so-called governors. The ordinary number of the patients was at least ten or twelve hundred; at times the number was almost doubled. They were constantly coming and going. Fifty, sixty, eighty, and at times a hundred poor sick entered daily, some to remain a week, others a fortnight, others a month or more, and others to die. Twenty to twenty-five thousand passed through the hospital annually. According to Feillet, even though the revenues had been rich, they would have sufficed to render proper care to only one fourth of the 1800 patients there in 1631.

The Order of the Augustinian Brothers of the Hôtel-Dieu had become defunct at the beginning of the century to the great spiritual detriment of the patients. The activity of the Augustinian Sisters, numbering at this time about 100 professed and 50 novices, fluctuated until 1635, when one of them, Geneviève Bouquet, definitively organized their common life. The members of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament decided in 1632 to send a layman and an ecclesiastic to the hospital weekly to instruct the sick and to hear their confessions.

The rules of the institution had long demanded that the patient go to Confession before being admitted. This led to grave abuses. The sick at best were either unable or unprepared. Many merely simulated Confession for fear

of being refused admission. The spiritual care of the patients was then practically neglected until they were on the point of death.[10]

Such in brief were the conditions with which Mme. Goussault came in contact on her visits to the Hôtel-Dieu, and which she hoped to ameliorate with the aid of St. Vincent. In doing so she was perhaps unaware that she was but renewing an attempt made by a number of charitable ladies during the early years of the century, but abandoned after an unsuccessful trial of four years.[11]

St. Vincent wanted time to deliberate, not only as was his wont regarding all new undertakings, but for the additional reason that here it was a question "of using one's sickle in another's harvest," to which he was ever characteristically averse. Nothing daunted, the pious lady had recourse to the Archbishop of Paris. He approved of the plan and communicated his wishes to Vincent. "Recognizing the will of God through the organ of his prelate," Vincent immediately set to work with enthusiasm. A confraternity was very soon organized with a membership of a hundred to a hundred and twenty, among them ladies of the highest French nobility.[12]

They had the usual staff of officers: the president with her two assistants and the spiritual director. St. Vincent was to hold this latter office permanently.

For the success of this work, St. Vincent foresaw the prime importance of having the good will and the coöperation of the administrators and nurses of the Hôtel-Dieu. He accordingly went in person to the spiritual and temporal administrators of the institution and informed them of the Archbishop's orders and of the good intentions of the Ladies. The administrators not only passively consented, but urged

[10] *Cf., v.g.,* Chevalier, *l'Hôtel-Dieu de Paris et les Socurs Augustines,* 253 sqq.; Feillet, *La Misère au temps de la Fronde,* 25; *Statuts d'Hôtels-Dieu et de Léproseries,* 46, No. 21; Coste, 3 sqq.; Goyau, 76; Abelly, i., 197, 205.

[11] In 1608, the administrators of the hospital welcomed the ladies who came to assist the sick at their meals and to bring them sweetmeats; but four years later, the religious were forbidden to receive bread, wine, and meat for the sick, since the inconveniences and the confusion resulting therefrom were out of all proportion to the advantages. Chevalier, 253.

[12] Abelly, i., 195; *Lett.,* i., 87, No. 76, To M. du Coudray at Rome, July 25, 1634.

the Sisters "to receive the ladies religiously, civilly, and affably, showing them . . . those who were in the greatest need in order that they might assist them, and then to retire to occupy themselves with their ordinary occupations."[13]

St. Vincent, on his part, instructed the Ladies "to present themselves to the religious who have care of the sick, offering to aid them in order to participate in their good works; to esteem and respect them and to show them all deference. If their services were not always kindly received by the religious, they were to "make excuses and endeavor to enter into their sentiments without ever contradicting or grieving them or wishing to dominate over them."

This prudent approach and the resulting kindly relations soon effected that the Ladies had full liberty to go from hall to hall and from bed to bed on their mission of charity. (See pp. 114-5.)

The Ladies, when visiting the sick at the hospital, were instructed "to dress as simply as possible . . . in order to appear poor with the poor," that the contrast between luxury and poverty might not accentuate the sorry plight of the poor. (See pp. 148-9.)

Upon entering the hospital, they were "to invoke . . . the assistance of our Lord, Who is the true Father of the poor, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and of St. Louis, the founder" of the institution;[14] or, as the constitution of 1660 says: "They shall enter the chapel of the said Hôtel-Dieu and adore our Lord, offer to Him the service they have come to render, and ask Him graciously to accept it and to grant them for this purpose the charity and the humility with which He honored St. Louis in the same place."

The rendering of spiritual aid to the poor sick of the Hôtel-Dieu was the prime purpose of this association. The instructions demanded that they receive Communion on the days on which they were employed in this good work, in

[13] Chevalier, 338, sqq.

[14] The points of this paragraph are taken from the original instructions of St. Vincent, 1634, Abelly, i., 198 sqq.; the regulations of 1636, Coste, 113-4; and the constitutions of 1660, Coste, 100 sqq.

order that it might "please God to speak Himself through their mouths to these poor people." They went in turns to the hospital every day at two o'clock. Each one had to work in that quarter of the hospital which happened to fall to her lot on her first visit there, until she had disposed all to make a general Confession.

The Ladies were "to conduct themselves toward the poor sick with great humility, meekness and affability, sympathizing with them in their misfortunes, exhorting them to suffer with patience and with submission to the will of God." The women and girls "whom they found ignorant of the things necessary for salvation" they were to instruct "in a familiar manner and by way of conversation," and to dispose "to make a general Confession, if they saw that they had need of it."[15] Finally, the Ladies were instructed to "try to prepare them to die well if their sicknesses were dangerous, or to make the firm resolution to lead a good life if they had hope of recovering their health."

In order to facilitate the work of the Ladies, St. Vincent had a special little catechism containing the more necessary points of instruction printed for their use. They were told to hold this book in their hands during the instructions and to limit their teaching to its contents in order to avoid the appearance of preaching or of following their own mind in so important a matter.

Before retiring after completing their work for the day, the regulations urged them to "adore the Blessed Sacrament," to "thank God for the grace" which He had given them "of making use of them for the salvation of these poor members," and to pray Him "to grant them the grace of making their Confession well."

After two years' experience, St. Vincent saw the utility of assigning the task of instructing the sick to the Ladies better fitted for the work by piety and learning. Fourteen[16] were chosen by the officers to devote themselves exclusively to it, two for each day of the week. Their appointment

[15] Priests were assigned for the instruction of the men.

[16] This number was retained throughout (Coste, 103, 7, 1°) in spite of the fact that St. Vincent was of the opinion for a time that seven sufficed (*Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 227).

lasted three months.[17] At the lapse of this time others were chosen to replace them. At the time of these elections, both the Ladies who had finished their term of office and those newly elected, together with the officers of the association, held a meeting in the room near the Hôtel-Dieu. Here, for the instruction and encouragement of these newly chosen, the Ladies who were leaving office gave a detailed report of their methods of approach and procedure, of the difficulties they encountered in their work, and of their successes and failures.

Special care was taken to have priests on hand to complete the work begun by the Ladies. At the request of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, seven religious communities had pledged themselves in 1633 to send a priest on a specified day of each week to hear the Confessions of the sick. The plan succeeded for a year and was then abandoned. With the consent of the superiors the Ladies now engaged and paid two priests to devote their time to the work, one of whom was conversant with several languages. As the volume of the work increased, however, they proved insufficient. Accordingly, in 1642, again after due consultation and with the requisite permission, their number was increased to six, apart from those ordinarily stationed at the Hôtel-Dieu. These ecclesiastics were to devote their entire time and service to the spiritual instruction of the men and to the administration of the sacraments to all the sick. For this reason they were dispensed from assisting at the divine offices. Before entering upon their duties, they made a spiritual retreat at Saint-Lazare and renewed it there every year. They were lodged and fed at the Hôtel-Dieu. In addition to a salary of 40 crowns, the Ladies assured them of stipends for their Masses which they went daily to read at the church of Nôtre-Dame.[18]

The results of these efforts were very satisfactory. In the first place, the abuse of forcing the patients into a hurried Confession before being admitted was discontinued.

[17] According to the first plan it was to last six months (Coste, 113, 2°), but very soon, probably the same year, it was reduced to three (Idem, 116, 3°).

[18] Abelly, i., 204-5; Chevalier, 320; Coste, 15.

Other results, which St. Vincent reports in a conference to the Ladies, are the reconciliations "of the poor sick in their quarrels, which are frequent," the reformation of "a number of women who have two husbands" and of others of loose morals; young women of twenty to twenty-five years who are in sin, promise rather to die than to offend God," children are instructed, the sick are consoled and prepared for the reception of the different Sacraments and assisted at their death.[19]

But the Ladies did not limit their activities to the spiritual relief of the poor sick. In order not to make their visits empty-handed they, in agreement with St. Vincent, from the beginning thought it expedient to bring some little delicacies by way of collation between dinner and supper. They rented a room near the Hôtel-Dieu where these were kept and prepared. The Daughters of Charity were engaged to take charge of buying and preparing the necessary things, and to assist the Ladies in distributing them to the sick.[20] Every morning milk soup was distributed to those sick whose condition allowed it.[21] At about three o'clock in the afternoon[22] they brought the collation for all.[23] It consisted of

[19] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 227, 228; Coste, 120-2.

[20] The Ladies had from the beginning the thought of enlisting the aid of the Daughters of Charity. On the day after the first preliminary meeting, St. Vincent wrote to Mlle. le Gras that they would need four of the Daughters (*Lett.*, i., 91, No. 82, June, 1634). The plan, was, however, for the time being abandoned, for a few days later St. Vincent wrote to Mlle. le Gras: "I think they will not take your Daughters for the Hôtel-Dieu. They think that women whom one presents from the city will be better fitted to represent the Ladies in their absence" (*Ibid.*, 348, No. 308, incorrectly dated 1640). If this second plan was put into execution it was only for a very short time, since some of the Daughters of Charity were already in the service of the Ladies at the Hôtel-Dieu before July 31, 1634 (*Confér. aux. Filles de la Char.*, i., 7, No. 1, July 31, 1634; *Cf.* Coste, 12). According to the constitution of 1660, the Daughters were also "to inform the Ladies to whom and how they ought to distribute them [the collations], showing them the dying and the convalescent ready to leave. . ." (Coste, 106).

[21] This was later discontinued by the Ladies, because the hospital authorities attended to it. Abelly, i., 200.

[22] The Constitution of 1660 provides that the Ladies repair to the hospital at 2 o'clock and leave at 5 o'clock in summer and at 4 in winter. Coste, 103-4.

[23] St. Vincent, however, once upbraided "some of the Ladies who distribute the collations to all the poor against the order, which is that they be given only to the most sick." *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 228, 4°, No. 9; Coste, 122, 3°, No. 4.

white bread, biscuits, preserves and jelly; grapes and cherries in season; and citrons, cooked pears, and sugared toast during the winter.[24]

Though forced by economy to diminish the quantity of the collations, the Ladies continued the service throughout[25] in spite of the expense, which for the fiscal year 1657 amounted to 5,000 livres, whereas the receipts for that year were only 3,500 livres, and in spite of the opposition of some of the Ladies who failed to see its utility. In its defence St. Vincent stated that, though diminished, the sick were as satisfied with it as in the beginning, that the religious and people who had been frequenting the hospital for twenty years were convinced of its practicality, but especially that it gave the Ladies entrance into the Hôtel-Dieu, where both they and the sick derived profit and the religious were given encouragement.[26]

We find several statements of St. Vincent which throw some light on the actual working relations which existed between the Ladies of Charity and the religious of the institution. He wishes "that the Ladies no longer complain to the Sisters because the sick are wanting in cleanliness." This, he adds, "should not cause wonderment in view of the fact that 750 sheets are needed daily." Some of the Ladies were complaining that they did not find the same Sisters in the halls from visit to visit. Vincent tells them it is necessary to change them; otherwise "in the course of time they contract serious illnesses and die." Furthermore, "the Ladies should not notify the religious of the want which they might

[24] On account of the expenses the Ladies also discontinued giving the bread and pears, but the former was taken up by the hospital authorities. *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 226, No. 9; Coste, 120, No. 4.

[25] Coste, 103. St. Vincent could say in 1639 or 1640 that it had never been interrupted except for twenty days, as a measure of precaution while some contagious cases were reported at the Hôtel-Dieu (*Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 226, No. 9; Coste, 119, No. 4). It was again interrupted in July, 1640 (Coste, 120, n. 1). St. Vincent wished to have the Ladies avoid entering the hall of the contagious by sending in their place Daughters of Charity *(quelques bonnes filles dévotes)* who were willing to sacrifice themselves (*Lett.* i., 174, No. 170, To Mlle. le Gras, 1637; Coste, 11). The constitution of 1660 specifically states that the Daughters shall fulfill the duties of the Ladies "when there is rumor of contagion and when the said Ladies cannot go to the said Hôtel-Dieu without danger" (Coste, 106).

[26] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 202, No. 6, July 11, 1657; *Ibid.*, 226, 228, No. 9; Coste, 120, 122, No. 4; Idem, 157, No. 14.

find among the sick, but should address themselves to one of the officers" of the confraternity.[27]

St. Vincent expresses his appreciation for this work of the Ladies of Charity in one of his letters. He writes: "Those who have not seen it, find it almost incredible and those who witness it are edified. For, indeed, this life is the life of saints and of great saints who serve our Lord in His members in the best possible manner.[28]

D. *The Daughters of Charity*

The Daughters of Charity comprised the second class of St. Vincent's social workers—those who devoted their entire time to the care of the poor, even adopting it as their life's work. As already stated, they owe their origin immediately to the failure of the Ladies of the Parishes to render personal service to the sick in their homes. The Ladies were delegating their servants to fulfil their duties of charity with very unsatisfactory results.[29] Both the Ladies and St. Vincent saw the need of engaging workers who were at once willing and capable as well as in a position to devote their entire time to the work.

At this juncture, Marguerite Naseau, a poor girl from Suresne, presented herself to Mlle. le Gras and expressed her willingness to nurse the sick under the direction of the Ladies. She was given some instruction in the care of the sick and assigned to the parish of Saint-Saveur. She rendered such excellent service that the Ladies of the other parishes asked for similar workers.[30]

St. Vincent on his missions in the country districts had

[27] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 228, No. 9; Coste, 117, No. 3; Idem, 121-2, No. 4.

[28] *Lett.*, ii., 278, No. 741, To M. Cornaire, almoner of Hospital at le Mans, Sept. 20, 1650.

[29] Some of the Ladies, however, even after the foundation of the Daughters of Charity, continued to visit the sick in person. As late as 1642, Vincent spoke thus to the Daughters: "You are witness, you particularly, our Sisters of Saint-Sulpice, with what zeal and what fervor these good princesses and these noble ladies, whom you accompany, serve the poor." *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 56, No. 8, June 14, 1642.

[30] Marguerite Naseau, the first Daughter of Charity, had learned to read on her own initiative while herding cattle in the fields, and then had taught other poor children. St. Vincent had met her at Villepreux during a mission. She worked also in the parishes of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet and of Saint-Benoit. She died of the pest which she contracted while ministering to the sick.

met a number of pious, self-sacrificing girls, who like Marguerite Naseau, on the one hand, were not disposed to enter the married state and, on the other, lacked either the desire or the requisite dowry to become religious. These, he thought, could be brought into the service of the poor sick and with proper guidance become well fitted to meet the need. A number of such girls was soon procured. Thus was laid the foundation of the Daughters of Charity.[31]

The training that the first Daughters of Charity were given has been discussed in the preceding chapter under the head of The Social Worker (pp. 139-44).

It was St. Vincent's first endeavor to place one Daughter of Charity in each parish where the confraternity of the Ladies was established. He increased the number, usually appointing two or three to each parish,[32] and assigned the Daughters to other places and to other duties as the Congregation grew.

The Daughters of Charity were subject to the Ladies in all that pertained to the care of the sick. Their relations are thus described by St. Vincent himself when addressing the Daughters: "It is for them to order and for you to obey. . . . You must . . . not encroach upon their authority in any way by ordering things yourselves. . . . They are as the head of a body and you are only the feet."[33] Moreover, their rule demands that "they shall render . . . obedience in that which regards the service of the poor . . . to the Ladies of Charity of the parishes, who are in charge."[34]

[31] *Confér. aux Filles, de la Char.* i., 181-2, No. 18, Jan. 22, 1645; *Ibid.*, 210, No. 21, Febr. 13, 1646; *Ibid.*, 395, No. 35, Dec. 22, 1648; *Ibid.*, 530-1, No. 45, Febr. 24, 1653.—In founding the Daughters of Charity, St. Vincent did not found a religious order. Throughout his life he took every precaution that they be not religious either in name or in reality. *Cf. Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 92, No. 61, Aug. 1 & 8, 1655; & *Ibid.*, 603-4, No. 103, Aug. 24, & Oct. 19, 1659. They were to have "as convent only the homes of the sick; as cell, a rented room; as chapel, the parish church; as cloister, the streets of the city or the halls of the hospitals; as enclosure, obedience; as grating, the fear of God; and as veil, holy modesty." *Règ. com.*, ch. i., art. 2.

[32] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 497.

[33] *Ibid.*, 167-8, No. 1, Date unknown, *Cf.* also Abelly, ii., 634, *Pièces Justificatives*, I. *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 54, No. 8, June, 14, 1642; *Ibid.* 604, No. 51, May 25, 1654; *Ibid.*, ii., 319, No. 79, Nov. 11, 1657; *Ibid.*, 351, No. 81, Dec. 2, 1657; *Ibid.*, 614, Aug. 24, 1659.

[34] *Règ. Comm.*, ch. iv., art. 4, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 346.

The Daughters were in particular forbidden "to undertake the care of any sick or to give anything to any poor person contrary to the prescribed order or against the intention of the lady officers."[35] They were to keep the Ladies well informed concerning the condition of the sick, to get their orders from them, and to render to them an account of their work. They were instructed to urge the Ladies, and others as well, to be generous in the assistance given to the poor sick.[36]

Their attitude toward the sick, those who were excluded from their nursing, and their obedience toward the physicians, have been discussed in the foregoing chapter under the caption of The Nurse (pp. 147-52).

St. Vincent thus traces out their daily programme. "Immediately after the morning's meditation, and in summer even before the reading of the subject, they shall be solicitous to bring the medicines to the sick, and upon their return they shall go to Mass, during which they shall be able to make their meditation when they have not been able to do so at 4:30 o'clock." After breakfast, taken in their room and consisting of a morsel of bread, "they shall repair at the usual hour, or sooner if need be, to the house of the Lady where the kettle of the sick" has been left the previous evening, "in order that the kettle be ready at exactly nine o'clock or later and that they be returned at 11:30 o'clock."

"After dinner they shall have care to read the prescriptions of the physician and prepare the remedies to bring them to the sick at the necessary hour, and leave the kettle for the morrow at the home of the Lady whose turn it is," unless the Daughters have accommodations to prepare the food themselves. "After supper they shall prepare the medicines for the following morning."[37]

The Daughters of Charity, therefore, visited daily all

[35] *Règ. Part. aux Soeurs des Paroisses,* ch. xviii., art. 4, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 623. *Cf.* also *Règ. Comm.,* ch. vii., art. 3, *Ibid.,* 318; *Ibid.,* 319.

[36] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 167; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* i., 186, No. 19, Jan. 29, 1645; *Règ. Comm.,* ch. vii., art. 3, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 318.

[37] *Règ. Part. aux Soeurs des Paroisses,* ch. xviii., art. 16, 1°-4°, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 628-9. *Cf.* also *Règ. Comm.,* ch. vii., art. 1, *Ibid.,* 311-2; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* i., 52-3, No. 8, June 14, 1642.

the sick that were under the care of the confraternity, administering to them both food and medicine. This prevented them from remaining for too long a time with any one sick person. Hence we find the following regulation: "If there be sick so abandoned that there is no one at hand to make their bed or to render them some other service still more abject, they may do it according to the leisure which they have, provided the Sister Servant [Superioress] find it proper; still they shall try to obtain, if possible, that some other person continues the same charity toward them for fear that this may retard the assistance of the other poor."[38]

In one of St. Vincent's conferences to his Daughters of Charity we find the question discussed whether or not the Daughters should go to the sick outside the prescribed times, merely in order to pay them friendly visits and "to console them." In support of the proposition, St. Vincent adduces the following four reasons: To visit "the poor is in itself an action very pleasing to God"; these visits could be very beneficial to the sick, often in need of instruction, with whom the Sisters in the morning had no time to tarry; they could be beneficial to the Sisters themselves since it would accustom them to seeing the sick and speaking with them; finally, the Sisters could thus ascertain whether those who served the sick acquitted themselves worthily of their charge. In opposition he advanced the following three reasons: It might seem "that it is not becoming that girls go to visit and console the sick and that the Church reserves this to ecclesiastics"; the other parishes do not have it, and the Sisters ought to content themselves with the ordinary service; and the parish priest and the ecclesiastics might become dissatisfied and fear an encroachment on their charge. After some discussion it was decided in the affirmative with the following restrictions: First, these visits should be made by the Daughters who distribute the medicines to the sick in the afternoons; secondly, they should not be made every day since, on the one hand, the house might not always be able to spare the Daughters for it and, on the other, the sick themselves might become wearied; thirdly,

[38] *Règ. Part. aux Soeurs des Paroisses,* ch. xiv., *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 620.

an older and a younger Daughter should always go together in order that the latter might thus acquire some practical knowledge.[39]

Where there were two or more Daughters in the same parish, one of them was appointed superioress, called the Sister Servant. The others were immediately responsible to her. Without her permission they could not even give "an egg nor a portion larger than the ordinary nor any remedy."[40]

They were instructed to report monthly at the mother house to render an account and also to go thither once a month for a conference on their rule. They were told not to come all together, lest the Ladies complain of their absence. Apart from this they were forbidden to leave their parishes without necessity, even for the purpose of hearing a sermon, gaining indulgences, assisting at processions, and the like.[41]

Their relations towards the parish priests were to be very respectful but at the same time very reserved. They were instructed neither to nurse them in their illnesses nor to furnish them with remedies; likewise not to discharge the duties of sacristan, such as washing the altar linens, attending to the sanctuary lamp, and the like. They had been sent to assist the poor sick; all else was beyond their sphere. For the same reason, they were forbidden to nurse persons of prominence as well as their children, their servants, and domestics.[42]

E. *The Priests of the Mission and the Sick*

The Priests of the Mission were established to conduct missions among the poor people of the country districts, but their relations with the sick during these missions make them deserving of at least passing mention here.

"To visit and console the sick" is enumerated by Abelly among the ordinary functions of a mission. And, in fact, during the whole time of the mission, which lasted some-

[39] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 290-3, No. 2, *Conseil du 5 Juillet 1646.*

[40] *Règ. Part.*, ch. xviii., art. 14, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 628.

[41] *Règ. Part.*, ch. xviii., art. 12, *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 627; *Ibid.*, art. 15; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 606, No. 51, May 25, 1654.

[42] Abelly, ii., 452.

times from two to three weeks, they frequently visited the sick and poor, alleviating their bodily and spiritual needs to the best of their ability. Toward the end of the mission several sermons were usually devoted to charity towards the poor, and the mission terminated with the establishment of a confraternity of charity for the care of the poor sick.[43]

Still we find that St. Vincent instructed the priests who labored among the soldiers to devote their entire time to the spiritual works of mercy. He says: "They shall leave the corporal assistance of these [the pest-stricken], as also the other sick, to those whom Providence employs in these functions."[44] The closing words of this quotation give the probable reason for this restriction; namely, that provisions were already made for the care of the sick.

St. Vincent wished further that the missionaries go two and two, and not alone, on their visits to the sick. He had learned from the experience of others the dangers and the suspicions that might arise from lonely visits.[45]

St. Vincent was once asked if it were permissible for a missionary who knew medicine to mix remedies and give them to the sick on the missions. After considering the matter fully, he said he personally could see no objection to it, and, he adds, "if others find none, you will do well to permit M. Deu (the missionary in question) to exercise his charity in this case, provided these corporal remedies do not divert his spiritual functions and do not cost him much trouble and expense."[46]

This phase of St. Vincent's work is especially interesting in as far as it shows how inseparably united, in his estimation, were the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We have seen how the confraternities, organized primarily for the bodily relief of the poor and sick, also provided for their spiritual welfare. Here we see a congregation organized to promote the spiritual well-being of the poor peasantry devoting part of its time to their material good.

[43] Abelly, ii., 18, 21-2, 66, 245.
[44] *Regulations for Missionaries in the Army,* 1636, Abelly, i., 232.
[45] *Lett.,* iii., 148-9, No. 1115, To M. Ozenne, Supr. at Warsaw, Apr. 2, 1655.
[46] *Lett.,* iii., 530, No. 1443, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome, Aug. 17, 1657; *Ibid.,* 702-3 No. 1573, Dec. 21, 1657.

2. *Hospital Nursing*

The Daughters of Charity, instituted originally to assist the Ladies of Charity in serving the poor sick in their homes, proved so successful that they were soon in great demand throughout France for the care of the sick in hospitals. The first hospital to which they were sent by St. Vincent was that of Angers. We shall center our attention especially on St. Vincent's relations with this institution in studying his hospital methods.

The hospital of Angers was built toward the end of the twelfth century by the seneschal Stephen of Marchay with the consent of Henry II, who probably also royally endowed it. The temporal administration was confided to devoted laymen. Stephen was their head and director. The spiritual care was undertaken by the parish priest of Ronceray, within whose parish the hospital was situated. As the number of patients increased, the services of the parish priest proved inadequate, and Stephen procured the appointment of four secular priests with pastoral rights within the hospital. The sick were nursed by religious brothers and sisters, at first as seculars, but they soon adopted the rule of St. Augustine. Lepers, paralytics, the blind, thieves recently mutilated or marked by justice, and foundlings were excluded. Poor women were admitted for the period of confinement.

The institution rendered satisfactory service in the main until the end of the fifteenth century. But thereafter abuses crept in. In 1548, on account of the increasing luxury of the priors, the great number of the poor who were refused admission, and the complaints of the patients badly treated, the matter was brought before the parliament and the hospital was placed under municipal management. The faithful of the district remained loyal to the hospital throughout and supported it liberally, but abuses continued. Things had come to such a pass in 1639 that the city officials and the administrators of the hospital had recourse to the king and to the lords of his council, and proposed as remedy the return to conditions as established by the founder.

It was at this point that the Daughters of Charity were

placed in charge of the nursing. Twenty years later, in 1660, the following plan was definitely put into effect: The temporal administration was committed to four laymen named by the city; the nursing was entrusted to the Daughters of Charity; and the spiritual administration was given to removable secular priests approved by the bishop. The religious men still living could continue until death to lodge at the hospital at its expense.[47]

St. Vincent and Mlle. le Gras drew up the constitution for the Daughters of this hospital. It demands as a prerequisite that the Daughters have the liberty to live according to their rule, which, however, obliges them to quit all when the service of the sick requires it Nor can the administrators demand of them to change their dress either as to form or color. In temporal matters and in all that concerns the service of the sick they are subject to the administrators, with the restriction, however, that the administrators cannot associate with them any woman or girl without their consent,[48] nor oblige them to sit up with the sick outside the hospital.[49] They are to render an account of their services and administration to the administrators alone. The administrators are asked to uphold them in their relations with the officers and the servants of the house and with the poor sick. They can call their attention to their failings "in private, never aloud nor in public," and the Daughters are asked to correct them with the grace of God.

The Daughters are to be nourished and supported by the hospital and also cared for by it when sick; they are to be considered as children of the house and not as hirelings. The superior general of Paris can recall as many as three of them and send as many others in their places at the

[47] *Statuts d'Hôtels-Dieu et de Léproseries,* 21-33; Misermont, *Le premier hôpital,* etc., 9-54.

[48] In the interval between the time that the Daughters were given charge and the drafting of this constitution, St. Vincent wrote in one of his letters: "It would be desirable that the Daughters were alone in the hospital; it is to be feared that the presence of this young lady is a cause of embarrassment. I had not been told of it; we would have stipulated differently had I known it." *Lett.,* i., 269, No. 258, To Mlle. le Gras, Nov. 12, 1639.

[49] This latter restriction seems to imply that the Daughters nursed the sick in their homes from the hospital; otherwise why the prohibition to sit up with them?

expense of the community at Paris. Likewise, the administrators are empowered to send back an equal number at the expense of the hospital and procure others in their stead, if, as one copy of the constitution reads, they be found unfit after a trial of a year or two. In this latter case the administrators must notify the superior general beforehand that he may have time to send the substitutes.[50]

Here, as in all St. Vincent's constitutions, provision is made that the Daughters "assist the poor sick . . . corporally and spiritually: corporally by serving them and administering to them food and medicaments, and spiritually by instructing the sick in the things necessary for salvation and procuring that they make a general Confession of their entire past life, in order that, by this means, those who will die may depart this life well prepared and those who will recover may make the resolution never again to offend God."

The admission of the patients to the institution is not in the hands of the Daughters. After the patients are duly admitted, she who has charge of putting the sick to bed, receives them with the thought that she is their servant and they her lords and masters. She washes their feet in warm water, which is kept in the little kitchen, changes their shirt and gives them a cap if there are any at the hospital. She then puts the patient to bed and locks up his clothes and money, if he has any, and has broth given to him at once.[51]

The care given to the patients can best be learned from the study of the daily routine traced out by St. Vincent for the Daughters of Charity. "At six o'clock they shall repair to the hall of the sick, empty . . . the basins, make the beds of the sick, [and] give them their medicines." At seven o'clock they shall give breakfast. For the most sick it shall consist of "a broth or of a fresh egg," for "the others of a little butter or cooked apples." "Thereupon they shall assist at holy Mass, if they have not done so at five o'clock."[52]

[50] Misermont, pp. 78-9.

[51] Idem, 87. The Sisters were forbidden to accept or give any present while the patient was in the hospital. Already the original constitution of Angers drafted during the first years of the thirteenth century calls the poor "our lords" (*Statuts d'Hôtels-Dieu*, etc., 24, No. 8).

[52] The constitution prescribes that they "arise at exactly 4 o'clock" every morning.

St. Vincent seems to fear that in attending Mass they may neglect some service to the sick, for he adds immediately: "And they shall take great care to have the broths brought at the exact hours to the sick who have taken medicine."

Those who have need of taking something to eat may do so now. "Then they shall return to the sick" and devote some time to the spiritual welfare of the patients, instructing the ignorant, preparing them for the reception of the sacraments, urging them to a life of piety, and assisting the dying. Here again St. Vincent appears to warn them not to become so absorbed in the spiritual good of their patients as to forget their bodily needs, for the following article of the constitution reads: "They shall have great care that the poor sick have what they need, their repasts at the prescribed hours, drink when they have need of it, and now and then some little delicacies."

The constitution continues: "At ten o'clock they shall all go to the infirmary and give dinner to the sick and serve them." The superioress shall say the prayers aloud and shall invite the sick to join her, at least mentally. If the menu depends on the Sisters and the order already established does not provide otherwise, the meal shall consist of "a broth, veal and mutton with a little beef for dinner, and roast meat and boiled beef for supper." Special provision is made for those whose condition does not allow solid meats. They shall be given "broths and fresh eggs alternately every three hours so that they have four broths and three fresh eggs per day."

While one Sister remains with the sick, the others take their dinner at eleven o'clock. When finished, two of them relieve her who has been on watch with the sick, "and they shall try to recreate the sick."

If there be no confraternity of Ladies of Charity to serve the collation in the afternoon, "the Sisters shall repair to the infirmary at exactly two o'clock in order to give some little sweetmeats to the said poor sick . . ., such as cooked apples and pears, and, if the gentlemen (the Fathers of the Poor) agree, some preserves and sugared toast." Those who are not needed to stay with the sick shall now return each to her own work, or, if there be nothing urgent, remain

in the infirmary and render the patients spiritual aid as in the morning.

"At four o'clock they shall give the medicines, change the sheets" for those for whom it is necessary, "adjust a little the beds of the sick" without making them rise. "At exactly five o'clock all the Sisters shall go to the infirmary to give supper to the sick and serve them as at dinner." One of them shall remain with the sick while the others take their supper. After their supper, i. e., about 6.30 o'clock, they shall return to the infirmary and put the sick, who are up and around, to bed before seven o'clock, and "shall order that there be some wine and some little sweetmeats to relieve the needs of the most sick."

At 7:30 o'clock night prayers are held in the infirmary. The sick who are able join in the prayers. The Sisters shall retire from the infirmary at eight o'clock, leaving the one whose turn it is to remain with the sick for the night. "She shall pass the night watching," assisting the most sick and aiding the dying, and, if her services are not in demand, "reading and sleeping now and then while the poor are resting." She is relieved as soon as the others rise in the morning. During the spiritual exercises of the community the Sister on watch is asked to make her morning meditation also, unless she is occupied with the sick, "in which case she shall know that the service she renders to the sick is a continual prayer before God." At six o'clock all the Sisters again come to the infirmary and the programme, as here outlined, is repeated.

St. Vincent is aware that these statutes are difficult of execution and the duties they impose repulsive to unaided human nature. He admonishes the Daughters, therefore, to "represent to themselves the happiness of their state since they serve our Lord in the person of these poor"; and, he adds, "that it may please God to grant them the grace to accomplish all these things, they shall often pray Him for it, they shall go to Confession and receive Communion for this intention; they shall walk in the presence of God, [and] shall choose as their patrons and their intercessors before God, the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, St. Louis, St. Genevieve and St. Margaret, Queen of Scotland."

Finally, that the Sisters may be ever mindful of their duties, the constitutions are to be read at the common meal of the community every Friday.[53]

The study of these regulations reveals the following salient features. The Daughters of Charity, while being entirely subject to their own superiors in matters of common life, owed strict obedience to the administrators of the hospital in all that concerned the care of the sick. The administrators, in return, were charged to uphold the Daughters in their relations with the servants of the house and with the sick. All the Daughters were obliged to personal service, performing every duty, even the most menial, that the care of the sick necessitated. At least one nurse was at the service of the sick at all times, and all of them were occupied in the infirmary for the greater part of the day. They were instructed to administer not only to the bodily wants but also, as far as possible, to the spiritual needs of their patients. And as regards the former, they gave not only what was necessary, as varied food and medicines to suit the needs of each, but also what tended to cheer and encourage—"some little delicacies," as the rule expresses it.[54]

3. *The Insane*

The biographies and conferences of Vincent de Paul have preserved merely a general account of his labors in behalf of the insane; but even these generalities contain some points of practical interest which well may find a place here. They are, however, rather expressive of his attitude toward this class of unfortunates than illustrative of his methods in their treatment.[55]

[53] Misermont, 80-88; *Lett.*, i., No. 286, 303-10.

[54] The rules of St. Vincent, in as far as they affect the care of the sick, differ only in detail from the original constitution of the hospital drafted at the beginning of the thirteenth century (*cf. Statuts d'Hôtels-Dieu*, etc., 24-5). St. Vincent was well pleased with the success of the Daughters' work at Angers. A visit there in 1649 gave him, as he expressed it, the greatest consolation he had experienced in a long time. He found only one little fault to correct, and that concerned the interior life of the Sisters. *Lett.*, ii., 160; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 72.

[55] No constructive provision was being made for the feeble-minded and insane at this period. If they became violent and dangerous to public safety they were imprisoned as common criminals. *Cf., v.g.*, Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part II., p. 5.

A. *Saint-Lazare and the Insane*

In taking possession of Saint-Lazare in 1632, St. Vincent took over also the care of several insane who had been committed by their relatives to the former prior. He immediately conceived a great attachment for them, serving them in person and having them served with the greatest charity and consideration. And when a short time later an opposing religious community endeavored to evict him from Saint-Lazare, his great anxiety was not the fear of losing his spacious house with its wide domains, but, as he himself acknowledged afterwards, the thought "of not seeing these poor people any more, and of being obliged to give up their care and service." For the remainder of his life, a space of twenty-eight years, St. Vincent continued the work, "receiving into this house these poor insane whom all repulsed and none wished to care for, regarding them as sick members of Jesus Christ and as such rendering them every service and every assistance, corporal and spiritual, of which they were capable."

St. Vincent once had occasion to refute the objection that the Congregation of the Mission had enough other employments without receiving the insane at Saint-Lazare. "Our rule," he said, "in this regard is our Savior, Who wished to be surrounded with lunatics, . . . and insane. . . . From all sides they were brought to Him that He might deliver and cure them, which He did with great kindness. Why, then, blame and find fault with us for trying to imitate Him in a thing which He has testified to be so pleasing to Him?"

He knew that the care of these was a trying and ungrateful task. He admonished the brethren, therefore, to seek strength from Christ, Who took upon Himself our infirmities "in order to sanctify all the afflictions to which we are subject and in order to be the exemplar and the prototype of all the states and conditions of men." He cited, too, the example of the Popes who during the early persecutions of the Church were condemned by the pagan emperors "to guard the lions, the leopards and similar other beasts." "But," he continued, "the men of whose external needs you

have charge are not beasts; still they are in a sense worse than animals by their misconduct and debaucheries."[56]

The brethren, according to St. Vincent, were to derive a practical advantage from their contact with these unfortunates. As the Popes, referred to above, "learned from their own experience," he said, "to have compassion on the humiliations and adversities of their spiritual children," so, too, "let us praise God, sirs and my brethren, and thank Him that He employs us in the care of these poor people . . .; for by serving them we see and learn by personal contact how great and diversified are human miseries; and by this knowledge we shall be better fitted to labor profitably in behalf of our neighbor; we shall acquit ourselves of our functions with so much greater fidelity as we know by our experience what it means to suffer."

It was once brought to St. Vincent's attention that the insane and the wayward at Saint-Lazare were at times given "portions of very distasteful and very badly prepared foods, even meat or wine left over from the preceding evening." He inveighed against the abuse, calling it an injustice both to the inmates, whose condition prevented them from demanding other treatment, and to their relatives, who paid for their stay in the house. He gave instructions that in the future they receive the same food as the members of the community, adding that those for whom a greater pension was paid should be given "something more than to those who pay less."[57]

B. *The Daughters of Charity and the Insane*

The account given of the efforts of the Daughters of Charity among the insane is more scanty still. They were given the care of the Hospital of the *Petites Maisons* at the incessant urging of the officers of the Grand Bureau of the Poor.[58] Here there were a large number of poor insane of

[56] Abelly, i., 152-4; Idem, ii., 396-9. The closing clause of this statement refers especially to the wayward boys who were also kept at Saint-Lazare and of whom he was speaking in connection with the insane.

[57] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 188-9, No. 61, *Répétition d'Oraison du 16 Mars 1656.*

[58] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 242, No. 13, Sept. 29, 1655. The *Grand Bureau des Pauvres* had been established by a royal edict of 1544. *Cf., v.g.*, Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part II., pp. 252 sqq.

both sexes. The Daughters cared for their "nourishment, maintenance, and cleanliness"; they served them "both in health and sickness, treating them with great kindness and charity." According to the testimony of the administrators of the institution, they proved very successful. They "curtailed many abuses that were offensive to God, ruinous to the goods of the house, and detrimental to these poor insane. In consequence one has been very edified and satisfied with their conduct."[59]

Also here St. Vincent emphasizes the disposition with which the Daughters should approach their work. "It is a great favor for those who are employed there," he says to them, "to have so beautiful a means of rendering service to God and to our Lord, His Son. You know, my Daughters," he continues, "that our Lord has wished to experience in His person all the imaginable miseries . . ., in order to show you that you can serve Him in all the poor afflicted. And because He has wished to enter into this state in order to sanctify it, you must know that He is in these poor weaklings deprived of reason as in all other poor."[60] "Ah! my Sisters," he says on another occasion, "I tell you again, never has there been a company which God honors more than yours. Is there any that has [care of] the poor insane? You will not find any; and still you have this good fortune."[61]

[59] Abelly, ii., 453, 4°.
[60] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 98-9. No. 62, Oct. 18, 1655.
[61] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 242, No. 13. Sept. 29, 1655.

CHAPTER II

Child Welfare Work

St. Vincent de Paul manifested keen interest in the handicapped children and expended much time and energy in laying the spiritual and material foundations upon which they could build their future spiritual and material well-being. We can distinguish four distinct lines along which he directed his efforts; namely, the care of the orphans, the care of the foundlings, primary schools, and industrial training. We shall, however, discuss only the latter three phases since the principles and methods involved in the care of the orphans, are touched upon in their different aspects in the discussion of the other three.

1. *The Foundlings*

The exposing of children, though universally practised, was in principle considered a civil crime and punishable as such. The court awards generally made a distinction between abandoning a child in a church, a public place, before the door of a religious house or other institution, and exposing it in an isolated place. The penalties inflicted varied with the degree of guilt from a mere apology to whipping, imprisonment, and banishment.[1]

Custom, which in the course of time had become law, had in some parts of France combined with the feudal rights of the lords the duty of caring for the foundlings exposed on their domains. The same custom, however, dispensed these lords from all further obligations from the moment they founded an asylum for the purpose and assured its future maintenance.[2]

[1] Lallemand, *Histoire des enfants abandonnés et delaissés,* Paris, 1885, p. 108. At the instigation of the ecclesiastics of the chapter of Paris an award of Parliament empowered the person in charge of the foundlings to arrest, if detected, those who exposed children. *Ibid.,* 133, 2.

[2] *Ibid.,* 110, 129, n. 4.

In other parts of France different prescribed methods for caring for the foundlings were in vogue. Thus in Provence they were cared for by the existing hospitals to which the inhabitants were, in consequence, obliged to contribute support. In Brittany and other northern provinces each district, or parish, cared for its foundlings directly through its officers.[3]

During the early Middle Ages charitable institutions in general were closed to foundlings. Fear that the number of inmates would otherwise become excessive in proportion to the revenue was the reason commonly alleged. This exclusiveness, was gradually broken down in consequence of the constant demands made upon the institutions, or in virtue of agreements entered upon with the lords or the founders.[4]

A notable exception to this exclusiveness was made by Guy of Montpellier and the institutions opened by him and his order. About 1160 he founded the Hospital Order of the Holy Ghost for the express purpose of caring, among others, for the foundlings. In the fourteenth century more than a hundred institutions under the direction of his Brothers had been opened in different cities of France.[5]

[3] It was evidently to the interest of these municipalities to ascertain, if possible, the origin of the foundlings in order thereby to evade the incumbent expenses. An investigation, therefore, preceded every other administrative act. It was made by proclamation and street crying, while at the same time the child was carried through the streets and crossroads. Rewards were offered to the inhabitants for revealing the guilty parents. When the investigation had proven futile and the city saw itself constrained to provide for the foundling, the first care of the officers was to have it baptized and then to confide it to a salaried nurse generally living in the country. The city was moreover responsible for all the expenses of clothing, medicine, etc., and frequently offered its ward opportunities of attending school and learning a trade. *Ibid.*, 114-20.

[4] *Ibid.*, 120-4.

[5] The vows of the Brothers embodied the words: "Negotia curabo ad honorem Dei ad victum, vestitum, sustentationem pauperum infirmorum, peregrinorum et *infantium expositorum*." It will be of interest to refer briefly to the regulations of the hospital at Dijon, founded in 1204, as being fairly typical of the methods he employed. Concerning the admission of foundlings, the regulations specify that the three religious women in charge of the nursing department "must endeavor gently to ascertain" whence the foundlings are brought and by whom. "If they ascertain anything on this point (keeping it secret from all others), they must make it known privately to the supervisors, that these may take them to their mothers if they have means of support, or oblige them to come and to nurse them if they are poor, and agree with those who exposed them for the indemnity of the

Paris, however, did not keep pace with the provinces in the care of its foundlings. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the deans, canons and chapter of Nôtre-Dame occupied themselves more or less directly with their care in virtue of letters patent, issued by Charles VII in 1445, confirmatory of the foundation of the Confraternity of the Holy Ghost. In 1552 an award of the Parliament imposed on the lords the obligation to contribute to the maintenance and education of the foundlings of Paris and its suburbs. This award was no innovation. It was merely the application of the time-honored principle referred to above. Still the lords endeavored, though in vain, to evade it under the plea that the care of the foundlings had been committed to the chapter of Nôtre-Dame. With the increase of institutions and their revenues the lords renewed their attempt, but a compromise was effected by which the institutions agreed to take the children while the lords subscribed for their support.

In 1570 the Parliament, desiring to make its award of 1552 more efficacious, ordered that the ecclesiastics and the lords concerned "assemble on days, in places, and at hours to be determined and assigned by the said Archbishop of Paris in order to confer and to draft memoranda and articles of police which might seem good to them and ought to be kept and observed for the nurture, government and administration of the said foundlings." In consequence, three widows were named to have "superintendence over the nurture and maintenance of the said foundlings," while a man was appointed to receive the contributions and another to continue "the custody and nurture of the said foundlings."[6]

hospital. . . . The names of all the children, together with the place, day, hour, month, and year when they have been found or sent and baptized, and their probable ages," are to be carefully recorded in a special register, and "if any note or mark is found on them" it is likewise to be recorded. Before the nurses are employed they are to be examined "by the surgeons who will be in service." When the foundlings have attained the age of six or seven years, they are to be transferred to another department of the institution and placed under the care of an ecclesiastic. (*Ibid.*, 124-9). We see, therefore, that already, at this comparatively early date, the care of the foundlings was fairly well systematized.

[6] *Ibid.*, 134. For the care of the foundlings at this period *cf.* also, *e.g.*, Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iii., 135-51; *Ibid.*, iv., part II., 69-102; Gerando, ii., 143-8.

All this goes to show that the city officials were at this time becoming really and effectually interested in the foundlings of Paris, but the interest waned during the turmoils of the Religious Wars and the wise provisions of the Parliament had all but come to naught long before the middle of the following century.

A widow and two servants had succeeded the personnel appointed after the investigations of 1570. The foundlings were many and the revenues meagre. The servants were wont to give the little creatures laudanum pills and other narcotics to hush their cries. Four or five were entrusted to one nurse. Some were nursed by diseased women, from whom they often imbibed contagion and death. Others were given to women to whose interest it was to pass as mothers. Others were sold, at times for the paltry sum of eight sous to beggars who would maim them in order to excite the compassion of the people. Others were mercilessly put to death to serve the diabolical purposes of magic or to supply bloody baths which a mania for prolonging life had cruelly invented.

In consequence of this inhuman treatment, the bringing of infants to *la Couche,* as the asylum had come to be generally known, was virtually a death sentence to the vast majority. St. Vincent is quoted as having even made the statement at least on two occasions that for the space of fifty years not one had been known to survive.[7] To aggravate the evil many of them died without having received Baptism. Though it was at all times prescribed to administer this sacrament conditionally unless it was certain the foundling had already received it, the widow in charge of *la Couche* acknowledged she had totally neglected it.[8]

Such was the unhappy lot of the foundlings at Paris

[7] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 658; Abelly, ii., 471; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.),* 206; Coste, 162. I have failed to find this statement corroborated in other writings relating to this period. The closest approach to it appears in Lallemand (*Hist. des enfants aband.,* 135). He says *almost all died.*

[8] The above description of the condition of the foundlings at this time has not been overdrawn. The facts are stated by St. Vincent, all his biographers, Royal Letters Patent of July, 1642, and by other reliable authorities. *Cf. Confér. aux Filles de la Char.,* ii., 658; Abelly, i., 207-8; Collet, 176; Coste, 19-20; Gerando, 149; Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.,* 135.

when St. Vincent first extended his charity to them in 1637.[9] As in all his other charitable works, he did not undertake the care of the foundlings as a constituent part of a preconceived programme of social relief. He was led into it, under God, by an accidental occurrence. While returning to Paris one evening he detected a beggar in the act of mutilating an infant. He rescued it and brought it to *la Couche*. Here he learned the deplorable state of affairs and immediately resolved to effect a betterment. He enlisted the sympathy of the Ladies of Charity. They were also urged by the ecclesiastics of Nôtre-Dame,[10] who, as we saw above, had an interest in the work. They accordingly visited *la Couche* for the purpose of formulating a plan of relief. They saw, on the one hand, the crying need of a radical reform, but on the other, taxed as they were with the other charities, they were also aware of the impossibility of caring for all the infants.

This predicament necessitated a delay of some months before the adoption of a definite plan. A main point at issue was whether the work should be continued at *la Couche* with the necessary reforms or whether this scene of past abuses be abandoned entirely and new quarters procured. Some of the Ladies favored the former course, while St. Vincent was firm in advocating the latter.[11]

In the meantime St. Vincent's favorite method of experimenting on a small scale was being followed. In a letter to

[9] St. Vincent had taken interest in similar work at an earlier date. To what extent is unknown. I have been able to find but one reference to it; *viz.*, in a letter of St. Vincent to Mlle. le Gras, Nov. 1, 1635. He writes: "Mme. the Duchess of Aiguillon . . . will speak to the procurator general to relieve you of the rescued children." *Lett.*, i., 118, No. 112.

[10] Abelly, ii., 471; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 657; *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 206; Coste, 162.

[11] "Mlle. Hardi," we read in one of his letters to Mlle. le Gras, "is constantly urging me to assemble the Ladies who have given their word to contribute to it. If I do not do it, I shall grieve her sorely; if I do it, it is against my better judgment. I doubt if it succeeds in the present state of things, for she intends that these Ladies go to the house of the foundlings and that all be done there within, and according to, the order which is established there; and my idea is that it would be better to abandon the property of this established house than to submit to the rendering of so many accounts and clearing of so many difficulties, and to found a new establishment and leave this one as it is, at least, for some time. What do you think about it?" *Lett.*, i., 168, No. 165; Coste, 21.

Mlle. le Gras, dated Jan. 1, 1638,[12] Vincent writes: "One was of the opinion at the last meeting [of the Ladies of Charity] that you be asked to make a trial with the foundlings—if there will be a way of feeding them with cow's milk and of taking two or three for this purpose." This experimenting continued at least till the middle of the following month, and St. Vincent would fain have prolonged it, but the Ladies were becoming impatient and urged decisive action. In a letter of St. Vincent written to Mlle. le Gras and dated Febr. 15, 1638, we read: "Concerning the foundlings, one urges me in a manner which is unthinkable on the part of M. Hardi; he holds me culpable for all the delays. . . . What inconvènience that you should have a goat bought and that you should continue to make a further experiment?"[13]

These last two citations suggest the question of artificial feeding. This method was far from being in common use at the time, and St. Vincent's experiment seems to have been premature. In 1679 the dean of the faculty of medicine at Paris and other physicians, surgeons, and midwives expressed their opposition to it. And even throughout the eighteenth century attempts at artificial feeding proved futile and often fatal. St. Vincent, too, discontinued it apparently because it proved unsuccessful.[14]

Artificial nursing had been resorted to in an attempt to solve the vexing problem of wet nurses. The difficulty of procuring them had always constituted one of the most serious problems encountered by *la Couche*. St. Vincent, too, was confronted with it.[15] And as late as the end of the century, when the care of the foundlings was well under state regulation, it was admitted on various occasions that

[12] *Lett.*, i., 123, No. 118. In this collection the letter in question bears the date of Jan. 1, 1636. This is evidently incorrect. *Cf.* Coste, 21, n. 1.

[13] *Lett.*, i., 192, No. 187.

[14] *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part II., 93; Abelly, i., 209. As a matter of fact, in a letter of uncertain date but probably written at this time, St. Vincent is astonished "at the death of so many of these little creatures" and sees the need of serious advice on the question (*Lett.*, i., 185, No. 183, To Mlle. le Gras). He does not mention, it is true, what he thinks might be the cause of these deaths, but they were undoubtedly a potent factor in prompting him to give the foundlings to wet nurses as soon as such could be had.

[15] *Cf., v.g., Lett.*, i., 242, No. 233, To Mlle. le Gras, Mar. 9, 1639; *Lett.*, ii., 213, No. 689, To Mlle. le Gras, Jan., 1650.

as many as one third of the children died in default of promptness in providing nurses.[16]

Finally, St. Vincent and the Ladies of Charity decided to rent a house near the gate of Saint-Victor. They felt financially capable of caring for only twelve of the foundlings. These were selected by lot "in order to honor," as Abelly says,[17] "divine providence, not knowing His designs regarding these little creatures." At the unanimous advice of the Ladies, the direction of the new institution was put into the hands of Mlle. le Gras. Mme. Pelletier, one of the first Daughters of Charity, was placed in immediate charge. It was St. Vincent's idea that she be responsible to the Ladies of Charity "for the things purely temporal," while "in spiritual matters, as in the direction of the Daughters [of Charity, whom St. Vincent had sent thither], the nurses, [and] the little rescued children," she be dependent on Mlle. le Gras, to whom she should render an account of the state of affairs "from time to time, as every week, or, at least, every fortnight."[18]

Other foundlings were transferred from *la Couche* from time to time as the means of the Ladies permitted. Finally after two years, during which, as St. Vincent later expressed it, successful trials had been made, several meetings held, many prayers said, and prudent persons consulted, St. Vincent thought the time opportune to attempt the care of all the foundlings. Accordingly, on Jan. 12, 1640, he convoked a general meeting of the Ladies of Charity, which was remarkably well attended.[19]

[16] Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.*, 170. Agencies for the employment of wet nurses had long been in existence at Paris. As early as 1350 we find official documents regulating their functions (*Ibid.*, 223-4). Their establishment had been made necessary, not only on account of the orphans and the foundlings, but also, and principally, because of the almost prevalent practice, in spite of ecclesiastical and medical opposition, of placing all infants with nurses (*Cf.* Franklin. *l'Enfant*, 25-47). Most of the nurses were from the country. But the salaries, particularly those paid by the institutions, were never attractive. Moreover, prospective nurses were often hindered from making the journey to Paris, to receive their charges, by the great distances and the bad roads, especially in winter, and by work in the fields during summer (Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.*, 170).

[17] Vol. i., 209.

[18] *Lett.*, i., 167, No. 164, To Mlle. le Gras; *Ibid.*, 191, No. 186; *Ibid.*, 231, No. 224.

[19] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 657; Coste, 153; *Lett.*, i., 280-1, No. 266, To Mlle. le Gras, Jan. 17, 1640.

The rough sketch of St. Vincent's discourse to the Ladies on this occasion has been preserved. He first stressed the motives for undertaking the work. The praises of these little ones, he adduces as the first motive, are pleasing to God (Ps. 8, 3). Moreover, they are in extreme need and to neglect to come to their assistance is to be responsible for their death; the public, it is true, has care of them, but for lack of funds they are sold to the first comer and allowed to die of hunger or some other misfortune. St. Vincent then appeals to their honor, asking them to deliver Paris of an opprobrium justly detested in the Turks, viz., the selling of human beings as beasts, and of purifying the Church of a cruelty not unlike Herod's massacre of the innocents.

There were also a number of objections to forestall. In the first place, the care of the foundlings belonged to the lords and not to private individuals, especially women. This objection is refuted in a few words: "But what will one do? And at Paris, who will undertake it? In the meantime these poor little creatures are dying!" It might be objected in the second place, that God has cursed "these little creatures because of their birth and that this is perhaps the reason why He does not permit that one put order" in the work. To this St. Vincent gives a twofold answer: "1. It is because man was cursed by God on account of Adam's sin that our Lord became man and died, and to take care of these little creatures, though cursed by God, is to do the work of Jesus Christ; 2. perhaps among them will be found some who will be great personages and great saints. Remus and Romulus were foundlings," as were also Melchisedech and Moses.

The most weighty objection, however, was the question of the necessary finances. If 550 livres, apart from the house rent, are required annually for the care of six or seven foundlings, says St. Vincent, what enormous sums will be necessary for the two or three hundred who are yearly exposed in Paris and the suburbs! "The remedy is," he concludes after some discussion, "to undertake what one will be able to do."[20]

[20] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 218-20; Coste, 123-6.

The Ladies yielded to Vincent's appealing request and offered to take over the care of all the foundlings. But, following the advice of Vincent, they did so only by way of trial "without the design of binding themselves by any kind of obligation," since at that time they had the assurance of only a very inadequate annual income.[21]

It now became a question of whether a special section of the Ladies of Charity be organized for the care of the foundlings or whether the functions of those already organized for the Hôtel-Dieu be extended to the children. The point was discussed at the same meeting of Jan. 12, 1640. St. Vincent first proposed the reasons favorable to a single organization. Most of the Ladies, he says, who are interested in the foundlings, are already members of the organization for the Hôtel-Dieu. Moreover, it would be difficult to find a sufficient number of Ladies with the necessary qualities and leisure to direct two organizations. Finally, jealousy might arise between the two organizations.

He then adduces reasons for the double organization in the form of objections that might be raised against the single plan. There may be some, he says, who can contribute to, and visit, the Hôtel-Dieu, but who cannot perform the same services in behalf of the foundlings. To this St. Vincent answers that all shall enjoy full liberty to contribute at will to either of the good works or to both; the same liberty shall be enjoyed as regards the visits at least for the time being. It might be further objected that the officers of the one organization will be overburdened in caring for the needs of both the Hôtel-Dieu and the foundlings. St. Vincent admits that this will be the case in the beginning, but when the work is once established, he adds, there will be no difficulty.[22]

It is evident from St. Vincent's method of arguing the case that he favored the single organization. The outcome is not stated in the sketch from which we have been citing, but later developments indicate that the single plan was adopted. Thus the final constitution of the Ladies of Charity drafted by St. Vincent in 1660 calls for only one staff

[21] *Lett.*, i., 281, No. 266, To Mlle. le Gras, Jan. 17, 1640; Abelly, i., 209-10.
[22] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 221-2; Coste, 127-9.

of officers, with the sole provision in favor of the foundlings, as St. Vincent had suggested in the meeting of Jan. 12, 1640, that the second assistant act as treasurer of their funds while the first assistant is treasurer of the general funds of the confraternity. The same constitution exhorts all the members to contribute indiscriminately to the various charities of the confraternity.[23]

Another month and a half elapsed before the project was put in execution. The house at the gate of Saint-Victor was too small and the Ladies had failed to obtain an adequate institution. Hence a number of the foundlings were transferred to the mother house of the Daughters of Charity, while twenty others were placed with nurses. Those whom the governess of *la Couche* had placed in the city were taken back. The number steadily increased. For the first months, each day brought one or more new charges. All of these, however, were not foundlings in the strict sense. Already in the meeting of Jan. 12, 1640, means were discussed "to hinder the poor people from sending their children hither though they be not of the origin of foundlings." What remedies were adopted is not known, but the evil continued. As late as 1668 and 1671 the Ladies of Charity had occasion to refuse entrance to children born in the Hôtel-Dieu and in houses of detention.[24]

At the meeting of April 20, 1640, St. Vincent took occasion to encourage the Ladies to persevere in their generous resolution. The sketch of his discourse has come down to us.[25] He insists again on the extreme needs of the foundlings and on the fact that divine providence may raise up great and holy men from among them. As an additional motive he says "they are in a special manner the image of Jesus Christ." He proceeds then to draw a manifold resemblance. His words are of interest, revealing as they do his high regard for the foundling. "Our Savior," he says, "was born without a carnal father, and these poor children are disowned by father and mother"; our Lord suffered in

[23] Coste, 103, 104, 128.

[24] *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.*, 156-7; Coste, 127, 130-1; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 221.

[25] Coste, 129-36.

the womb of His mother on the journey to Bethlehem, and these poor children suffer during the period of gestation through the carlessness or malice of their mothers; as soon as our Lord was born, He was persecuted unto death by His enemy Herod, and these are abandoned to death by their parents; our Lord fled into Egypt and found an asylum there, and these poor creatures find their safety among strangers who are nothing to them; "our Lord suffers poverty, misery, calumny and persecution because of the sins of His children, and these because of the sins of their mother"; "our Lord took upon Himself malediction and sin for His children, and these are cursed by God for their father"; our Lord suffers innocently, and these suffer for the sin of which they are not culpable. There is, however, he says, "this difference, that the first is the Son of God, and the others [the children] of men; the first of grace, and these of sin."

He adds further motives. The midwives of Egypt, he says, were blessed by God for sparing the lives of the male children of His people in defiance of the king's command; what blessings are not in store for the Ladies who not only do not kill these poor children, but give and conserve their lives! The daughter of Pharaoh, an idolatress, adopted Moses, found in the bulrushes; "and you, who are Christians, madames, ought with greater reason to adopt these as your own." Finally, he says, "God has given you the grace to respond to the inspiration which He has given you to undertake this good work, and in consequence, you are obliged to make use of it under penalty of His transferring" it to others.

As usual on such occasions, St. Vincent touched upon an objection that might be raised. It was the vital question of finances. He adduced a twofold answer in refutation; the one, to trust in God and do what one can; the other, to discontinue the work if it should become intolerable, since it was undertaken only by way of trial. He suggests that a collection be taken up for the purpose and concludes by urging them to emulate the few zealous Ladies who are financing the relief work of Lorraine [Cf. pp. 277-84] at a great personal sacrifice.

The expenses increased steadily. Within four years they had risen to 40,000 livres annually. In 1642 St. Vincent appealed to Louis XIII through the queen mother, and obtained from him by letters patent of July 30, 1642, a grant of 4,000 livres of annual rent, 3,000 of which were directly for the foundlings while the remaining thousand were for the support of the Sisters.[26] A further royal grant of 8,000 livres was made in virtue of letters patent issued in June, 1644.[27] The donations and the collections of the Ladies supplied the balance.[28]

Again in 1647 the Ladies were on the point of abandoning the work, as they were at liberty to do whenever they felt the burden unsupportable. For, it must be remembered, they had undertaken it only by way of trial and their only obligation was one of simple charity. St. Vincent accordingly convoked another general meeting. He followed his favorite method of expounding the reasons for the continuance of the work and refuting the possible objections. He reported the good results already obtained: five or six hundred children rescued from certain death and receiving a Christian training, and the larger ones placed, or about to be placed, in apprenticeships. He concluded with the words: "Compassion and charity have prompted you to adopt these little creatures as your children; you have been their mothers according to grace, since their mothers according to nature have abandoned them. See now if you, too, wish to abandon them. Cease to be their mothers, and you become

[26] Some eminent authorities state that this appeal was made to the king, not as ruler of the realm, but as a lord obliged to contribute to the maintenance of the foundlings in virtue of the award of 1552. *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.,* 135.

[27] This grant was not prompted by any motives of charity. To cite from the royal edict of June, 1670, which gave legal existence to the foundling institution of St. Vincent twenty years after his death: "Considering how far their [the foundlings'] conservation was advantageous, since some could become soldiers and serve in our armies, others laborers or inhabitants of the colonies which we establish in behalf of the commerce of our kingdom, we gave them also by our letters patent of the month of June, 1644, eight thousand livres to be taken each year on our five large farms. . . ." *Cf.* Gerando, *De la Bienfaisance Publique,* Paris, 1839, ii., 151.

[28] Coste, 26. We must bear in mind that also the Ladies of Charity of the Court [see pp. 261-2] participated in this work. To assist the foundlings is enumerated among their principal charges (Coste, 98). Moreover, we can justly suppose that generous persons were found who nursed and reared foundlings free of charge. *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.,* iv., part II., 90.

at present their judges; their life and their lot are in your hands; I go to take the votes and the suffrages; it is time to pronounce their sentence and to know if you are no longer willing to have mercy on them. They will live if you continue to take charitable care of them; on the contrary, they will infallibly die and perish if you abandon them; experience does not permit us to doubt it." "These Ladies," says Abelly, "were so deeply moved that all unanimously concluded that this enterprise of charity must be upheld at any cost."[29]

In consequence of the resolution here taken, the Ladies obtained from the queen the *château* of Bicêtre.[30] This building, spacious but unused for some time, had become the rendezvous of malefactors and persons of bad life. The Ladies had coveted it for the past four years, but had repressed their desires probably in deference to the objections of Mlle. le Gras. She was at all times opposed to it because of its distance from Paris, the difficulties of the way, its insanitary location, and the ill repute of its occupants. And even after the Ladies had taken possession of it and arranged some of the details of organization, she wrote thus to St. Vincent: "Experience will show us that it was not without reason that I was apprehensive of the lodgings of Bicêtre. These Ladies have the intention of demanding the impossible of our Sisters. They choose as a lodging the little rooms where the air will be directly corrupted and leave the large ones; but our poor Sisters do not venture to say anything. They [the Ladies] do not wish that Mass be said there, but that our Sisters go to attend it at Gentilly. And what will the children do meanwhile? And who will do the work?" She concludes with the sad remark: "I fear we must abandon the service of these poor little children."[31]

Another unpleasant event occurred a few days later. M. Leroy, who held from the chapter of Paris the powers of director and administrator of the foundling hospital, came to complain that he had not been notified of the transfer of the foundlings to Bicêtre and that his rights were not un-

[29] Abelly, i., 210-1; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 200-1; Coste, 26-7.

[30] Built under Charles V and restored under Louis XIII to serve as a hospital for invalid soldiers.

[31] *Cf.* Coste, 28.

derstood. He claimed the prerogative of giving instructions to the children whenever he so desired, of appointing a priest for the institution and of having full spiritual care. And as Mlle. le Gras remarked, "he was more jealous of this than of a bishopric or a cardinalate." His complaints caused great surprise. As a matter of fact, the Ladies had always made provision for the spiritual needs of the foundlings, convinced that the chapter allowed them a free hand in the matter. The Baptisms, Easter Confessions, instructions for first Communion, Masses and funerals had been regulated by them, and no one had ever gainsaid them.

At this period of the history of the foundlings, the active participation of Mlle. le Gras is felt more and more. Being often at Bicêtre, where she rendered an account of the smallest details of organization, she was in a position to know its needs better than anyone else. In a letter of Jan. 22, 1648, she states that fifty-two foundlings have already died at Bicêtre and another "fifteen or sixteen are but little better." "I hope," she adds, "that when everything will be arranged according to the desire of these good Ladies they will not go so quickly." She also laments the insufficiency of the alms. People see the spacious institution, she says, and know that the governesses are ladies of the highest social standing, and get, in consequence, the impression that the foundlings are amply provided for, whereas in reality the bare necessaries of life must be purchased on loans.[32]

To make matters worse, Mlle. le Gras had wished to make some little profit by selling the wine made from the vineyards of Bicêtre, but the tavern keepers of Paris protested and insulted and maltreated the Sisters. The police were forced to intervene and would have severely punished the culprits had it not been for the charitable intercession of St. Vincent.

The destitution increased to such a point in 1649 that even the necessary bread was not had for the foundlings. Paris at this time was in the excitement of the First Fronde [Cf. p. 310]. St. Vincent had left Paris and did not return until the month of June of that year [pp. 311-3]; a number of the Ladies of Charity, and among them some of

[32] Idem, 30.

the most prominent, had likewise quitted the capital. St. Vincent wrote to M. Lambert, the acting superior of Saint-Lazare, to send wheat to Bicêtre, and at the same time to Mme. de Lamoignon asking her to obtain from the city officials through the mediation of her son, an escort for its safe transport. He likewise wrote a letter to the Ladies of Charity urging them to hold a meeting and advise means of coming to the assistance of the foundlings.[33]

A further danger developed from the Fronde. The environs of Paris, overrun by the undisciplined soldiery, offered no security. The Sisters lived in constant fear. Mlle. le Gras instructed the Sister Superior to keep all the "Sisters together, and have great care of the young girls," whom she ought always to keep before her eyes "locked up in the school."[34]

Finally, the institution had to be evacuated. St. Vincent apparently was informed of this step only after it had been taken. He writes from Saint-Méen, April 5, 1649: "Since this place [Bicêtre] is uninhabitable, it is to be desired that it please the Parliament or the city to give another; but probably they will not do so." And again, a few days later: "I have been informed by letter that the foundlings have been withdrawn from Bicêtre; I am very anxious to know whither one has transferred them."[35]

It appears from these remarks that St. Vincent was under the impression that Bicêtre had already been abandoned permanently. Such was not the case. The foundlings were returned thither sometime between May 14 and November of that year.[36]

One of St. Vincent's first solicitudes after his return to Paris in June, 1649, was to assure the continuance of the work for the foundlings. It was a difficult task. The time was inopportune to ask new sacrifices of the Ladies and, as Mlle. le Gras wrote at this time, "the nurses commence to menace us very much and to bring back the infants, and the debts are multiplying to such a point that there is no

[33] *Lett.*, ii., 152-4, Feb. 11, 1649.
[34] Coste, 31.
[35] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 73, No. 3049, To Mlle. le Gras; *Lett.*, ii., 158, No. 645, To Mlle. le Gras, April 9, 1649.
[36] *Cf.* Coste, 32.

hope of paying them" (Coste, 32). The situation became more hopeless as the year advanced. The needs of the foundlings increased, the debts accumulated, and Mlle. le Gras sought aid from all sources in vain. She became discouraged and in November proposed not to receive any more children, and even spoke of abandoning the work entirely as an impossible undertaking.[37]

At this crisis St. Vincent called a meeting of the Ladies. A sketch of the discourse he held on this occasion has been preserved. "I shall tell you," he says in his opening words, "that they [the foundlings] are in great need and that there remains only sufficient to feed them for six more weeks, and that it is necessary to advise means of providing for their wants." As motives he stressed, as he had done before, the extreme necessity of the foundlings and the relationship of mothers which they held by divine providence towards these children. He does not hesitate to say that in consequence they are obliged in conscience to come to their assistance. "If you abandon them," he continues, "1. what will God say Who has called you to this? 2. What will the king and the magistrates say who, by verified letters patent, attribute to you the care of these poor infants? 3. What will the public say who have made acclamations of benediction seeing the care you take of them? 4. What will these little creatures say? 'Alas! our dear mothers, you have abandoned us! That our own mothers have abandoned us, well, they were wicked; but that you should do so, who are good, is equivalent to saying that God has abandoned us and that there is no God!' 5. Finally, what will you say at the hour of death, when God will demand of you why you have abandoned these little creatures?"[38]

In answer to the objection that "the necessity of the times . . . impoverishes everyone so that one can scarcely live from hand to mouth," he assures the Ladies that their charity will never bring them to poverty, because, using the words of Holy Writ, *qui miseretur pauperis nunquam indi-*

[37] Idem, 32-3.

[38] This citation is also of interest in as far as it strikingly shows how St. Vincent skillfully blended the natural and the supernatural in formulating motives of action.

gebit [He who shows mercy to a poor man will never suffer want. Prov. 28, 27]. Moreover, he says, there are a hundred of you; if each one gives a hundred livres it will more than suffice. But, he continues interrogatively, "I have no money? Alas! How many luxuries has one at home which serve no purpose!"

As means, St. Vincent suggests that the Ladies pray to God for the success of the work, receive Communion once for the same intention, speak to their relatives and friends and to the preachers through the parish priests, and, finally, resolve whether to discontinue the work or to make an effort for another year.[39]

St. Vincent again won the Ladies to his cause. The work of the foundlings was continued. But Bicêtre was discarded on account of the insanitary atmosphere, and the children were lodged in the suburb of Saint-Laurence, not far from Saint-Lazare and the mother house of the Sisters, in a group of buildings known as the *Treize Maisons* (The Thirteen Houses). The stormy period of the foundlings' history was now past. The silence which St. Vincent and Mlle. le Gras maintain in their correspondence on this point during the remaining eleven years of their lives, is proof of the uninterrupted success of the work. The institution was made a part of the *Hôpital-Général* [pp. 271-4] by a royal edict of 1670. It received at the same time a legal status, being accorded the rights and privileges of public establishments.[40]

The usual number of children exposed each year in Paris and the suburbs was at this time between three and four hundred. St. Vincent said on this point in a meeting of the Ladies, July 11, 1657: "One has observed that the number of those who are exposed each year is almost always equal and that there are found about as many as there are days in the year. See, if you please, what order in this disorder."[41] In reality the records show a slight increase during the twenty-two years that St. Vincent was interested in the work. From 1640 to 1649, 3,053 were admitted to the foundling asylum,

[39] Coste, 152-6; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 657-60.
[40] *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.*, 137-8; Gerando, ii., 150.
[41] *Lett. et Confér. de S. Vinc. de Paul (Suppl.)*, 206; Coste, 162.

while between the years 1650 and 1659, 3,683 had been fostered by the institution.[42]

The exact mortality rate of the children under St. Vincent's care is not known. He indicates, however, in the meeting of the Ladies of April 20, 1640, that he expects about one third to succumb. This number is not surprisingly large if we consider the conditions of the times. Approximately the same percentage obtained during the rest of the century and throughout the following century.[43]

According to the laws in vogue at the time, it was primarily the duty of the police of a given district to pick up a foundling and to bring it to *la Couche*. He was obliged to make a written statement of the place where it was found, of its condition when found, and of any other information he might have acquired concerning the child. Only secondarily did this duty devolve upon others.[44] St. Vincent, too, ordinarily received his foundlings through these official channels, as far as we know.

A letter written by him May 2, 1657, will serve to give us a further insight into the current legislation touching the question of foundlings, while at the same time revealing Vincent's general attitude towards it and how he would have evaded its hampering provisions in his charity for the infants.[45] It will also throw some light on the workings of a conference of charity. A child had been exposed at Villepreux, near Paris, so the letter states, and the parish priest and the husband of the treasurer of the confraternity had come to St. Vincent, the former to consult on a plan of disposing of the case, the latter to complain that his wife had been obliged to pay for the maintenance of the child. "I told the parish priest," continues Vincent, "that, if one exposed this child in this city and would send it to *la Couche*, as the police

[42] The number rose rapidly, however, during the remainder of the century. For the years 1690 to 1699 it reached 21,150. These numbers do not necessarily indicate a proportional increase in the number of exposures made at Paris, for the number of foundlings brought to Paris from the other parts of France was constantly increasing. *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.*, 161.

[43] *Cf.* Coste, 135, 204-5.

[44] Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.*, 133, 154-6.

[45] His attitude here seems to be at variance with his usual full-hearted submission to the laws of the realm. *Cf.* pp. 59-60.

of the districts are accustomed to do . . ., we would take care of it, but that it is forbidden by the decisions of the court for those who are charged with the care of the said infants to receive them without the orders of the said police and that we make it a matter of conscience not to act otherwise; that, if in concert with the provost he [the pastor] arranged to have it brought to his city and exposed, he need not be uneasy for the rest. And he did not do this; one has placed it in the meantime with a nurse for nine francs per month, which one obliges the treasurer of the confraternity to pay; and this is what her husband has come to complain of. But I have requested the parish priest to make a little journey hither to terminate this affair. . . . When he comes, we shall decide the manner of the disposition, which will be a trifle difficult because the nurse will not wish to give up the child except by order of the court, nor [will] the court of Villepreux [wish] to give orders that it be brought to Paris and exposed there, since, according to the ordinances, the lords are obliged to maintain the foundlings, and if this becomes known in this city the child will be sent back to Villepreux at the expense of the lord, if the father is not discovered and condemned to nourish it. . . . The only remedy, it seems to me, is that the provost give verbal command to the nurse to deliver this child to some other woman whom he himself will be able to prevail upon to bring it to Paris and to expose it here. This cannot be done without danger of being discovered, in which case she runs the risk of being imprisoned and condemned to whipping."[46]

The foundling asylum under the direction of St. Vincent served, in the first place, the purpose of a receiving station. The foundlings were brought thither to await their commitment to wet nurses from the country. In the meantime they fell to the charge of the wet nurses who, in accordance with the common usage of well regulated institutions of the period, were kept permanently for this purpose at the asylum. These were not volunteer workers, but received a monthly salary.[47]

As quickly as nurses from the country could be procured,

[46] *Lett.*, iii., 456, No. 1379, To Rév. Père de Gondi, May 2, 1657.
[47] Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part II., 89; Abelly, i., 211.

the children were entrusted to them. They, too, were paid a stipulated salary. But as early as April, 1640, St. Vincent refused to pay them unless they were able to show a certificate of the parish priest testifying that their charges were still alive.[48] This precaution implies the existence of the abuse of exacting payment though the child in their care had died.

St. Vincent provided that his workers keep in touch with the foundlings under their care. In the meeting of April 20, 1640, he exhorted the Ladies "to visit them in this city [Paris] two and two each day, according to the notice which will be sent," and, when possible, to visit also those in the country. He informed them at the same time that it had been proposed "to send a young man of piety from time to time to those places in order to be assured of the condition of these infants."[49] Abelly informs us that in 1649 a Brother of the Congregation spent almost six weeks in visiting the foundlings that had been placed in nursing throughout the villages. The Sisters of Charity, too, were sent on these tours of inspection.[50]

As was the practice of similar institutions in France,[51] the foundlings were returned to the asylum after the lapse of their nursing period. Here they remained under the training of the Sisters of Charity until old enough to be placed in apprenticeship or in service. Ten or twelve Sisters were ordinarily employed in this work.[52] St. Vincent was careful to have only the most virtuous appointed to it. "If Mlle. le Gras had angels," he is quoted as saying in a conference to the Daughters of Charity, "it would be necessary that she assign them to the service of these innocents." The reasons he gives are the plastic nature and the imitative tendencies of the child. "As the aunt [thus they call you]," he says, "so the children will be. If the aunt is good, they will be good: if she is bad, they will be bad, because they

[48] Coste, 131, 6°, *Plan d'entretien,* April 20, 1640.

[49] Coste, 131; *Cf.* also Idem, 120; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 227.

[50] Abelly, iii., 180; *Lett.,* i., 527, No. 457, To Mlle. le Gras, May 25, 1646: *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 35, No. 3015, To Mlle. le Gras; *Ibid.,* 36, No. 3016, To Mlle. le Gras, Sept. 20, 1642.

[51] *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.,* iv., part II., 80.

[52] *Cf. Règlement de 1660,* Coste, 106; Abelly, i., 211; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 497.

will easily do what they see done by their aunts; if you are angry, they will become peevish; if you show frivolity in their presence, they will be subject to frivolity; if you murmur, they will murmur as you do; if they are lost, they will blame you for it; do not doubt it, since you will be the cause of it." He later had occasion to say: "Have we any better Sisters than those who, for the love of God, wish to remain in this house in order to serve Him in the person of these infants? . . . I do not see elsewhere any better Sisters than these . . ."[53]

St. Vincent was occasioned to make these declarations, as he himself says, in refutation of the persistent rumor among the Sisters that "when a Sister was unfit for a parish or for some other place, one put her at the *Enfants-Trouvés* as in a prison." What gave rise to the rumor, or what kept it afloat, is merely a matter of conjecture. But the conclusion lies near at hand that the foundling asylum, for whatever reason, was not considered a desirable assignment by the Sisters.

The training given to the foundlings after their return to the asylum is thus described by St. Vincent in a report to the Ladies of Charity: "In learning to speak, they learn to pray to God, and little by little one occupies them according to custom and to the capacity of each; one watches over them in order to regulate them in their little ways and to correct in good time their evil inclinations." The intellectual training here given was very rudimentary, and especially so for the girls, since it was not thought expedient even to teach them to write.[54]

In conformity with his principle to extend his charity more particularly to the most abandoned, St. Vincent applied

[53] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 40-1, No. 57, Nov. 15, 1654; *Ibid.*, 200-1, No. 69, Dec. 14, 1656.

[54] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 206, Gen. Assembly of July 11, 1657; Coste, 29-30; Idem, 163; *cf.* also Abelly, i., 211-2; Idem, ii., 471. This latter point, however, cannot be urged in the light of prevailing conditions. The Ursulines of the time, it would seem, restricted the teaching of writing to those of their pupils who had the intention of entering religious life (*Cf.* Gerando, ii., 460). In France it long continued to be a bone of contention whether the art of writing was not a masculine prerogative; the corporation of writing masters at Paris, strove to arrogate to themselves the exclusive privilege of teaching it. *Cf.* Ravelet, 29-30; also d'Avenel, *Paysans*, etc., 114.

himself with special affection to the foundlings. He took a personal, individual interest in them. In his letters to Mlle. le Gras he would inquire about them. "I have had a notice placed in the sacristy this morning," he writes in one of these letters, "in order to have prayers said for this poor child. I beg you to tell me how she is this morning; I pray to our Lord that He may spare her."[55]

He looked upon the care of them as an honor and an obligation. He told the Ladies of Charity at the general meeting of April 6, 1647, that "God is the author of this good work in commanding men . . . to take care of the poor infants abandoned by father and mother." Abelly informs us that he often addressed his brethren in this wise: "Is it not the duty of fathers to provide for the needs of their children? And since God has substituted us in the place of those who gave them birth in order that we take care to conserve their lives and have them reared and instructed in the things of their salvation, let us be well on our guard not to become lukewarm in an enterprise so pleasing to Him. For, if after their unnatural mothers have thus exposed and abandoned them, we come to neglect the care of their nourishment and education, what will become of them? Can we consent to see them all perish, as formerly, in this great city of Paris?"[56]

It was one day reported to St. Vincent that one of the missionaries had blamed the care of the foundlings for the poverty suffered at Saint-Lazare, for, he said, the alms that had formerly come to Saint-Lazare were now being diverted by the benefactors to the foundlings whose needs appeared greater and more urgent. Vincent's reply to this complaint is well worth citing. "May God pardon him this weakness," he said, "which removes him far from the sentiments of the Gospel. Oh, what little faith to believe that, for procuring the welfare of children poor and abandoned as these are, our Lord is less bountiful toward us, He Who promises to recompense a hundredfold what is given for Him. Seeing that this good Savior has said to His disciples: Let these children come to me (Matt. 19, 14), can we reject or abandon them

[55] *Lett.*, i., 398, No. 349 (1642). *Cf.* also, *v.g., Ibid.*, 243, No. 234, Mar., 1639.

[56] Coste, 149; Abelly, iii., 179.

when they come to us? . . . Did they not occasion Him to give us a rule of salvation, since He orders us to become like unto little children if we wish to have entrance to the kingdom of heaven? (Matt. 18.3.) But to have charity for children and to take care of them is, in a way, to become a child; and to provide for the needs of foundlings is to take the place of their fathers and their mothers, or rather that of God, Who has said that, if the mother comes to forget her child, He Himself would take care of it and would not forget it. If our Lord were still living among men on earth and saw the abandoned children, are we to think that He, too, would wish to abandon them? It would without doubt be doing an injustice to His infinite goodness to entertain such a thought."[57] These words of Vincent de Paul portray his lofty concept of the dignity of the work for the foundlings, and are the expression of the deep conviction that prompted him to labor indefatigably for their welfare even in the face of apparently insurmountable obstacles.

Many of the European laws, at this time, v. g., those of Spain, Rome, Naples, and Russia, presupposed the legitimate birth of a foundling unless the contrary were proved.[58] We find no expression of St. Vincent's mind on this point. The nearest approach to it is the following event recorded in one of his conferences to the Daughters of Charity.[59] He is emphasizing the purity of life necessary in the Sisters, and relates how the queen of Poland had mentioned to one of them that the foundlings, when grown up, could be admitted into the Company. The Sister "makes this response without much reflection: 'Pardon me, madame, our Company is not composed of this kind of persons, for only virgins are received amongst us.'" And St. Vincent is quoted as giving these sentiments the stamp of his full approval by saying: "It was God who made her speak in this manner in order that you might understand that in the Company there must be only pure and chaste girls."

St. Vincent was very well pleased with the results of his

[57] Abelly, iii., 180-1. *Cf.* also *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 319.

[58] *Cf.* Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part II., 77-8.

[59] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 517, No. 43, Feb. 2, 1653.

work. He thus addressed the Ladies of Charity at their general meeting of July 11, 1657: "They [the foundlings] are fortunate to have fallen into your hands and they would be miserable in those of their parents who are ordinarily people poor or vicious. One need but see their daily routine in order to perceive the fruits of this good work which is of such importance that you have every reason in the world, mesdames, to thank God for having entrusted it to you."[60]

Still, as Lallemand correctly remarks, "charity did not await St. Vincent de Paul to busy itself with these unfortunate creatures cast away by their parents." "There existed for them rights to assistance," says Gerando, "legal rights, positive rights, which other indigents did not enjoy."[61] Paris, it is true, was slow in making provisions for its foundlings, and even after provisions had been made, it allowed deplorable abuses to render them inoperative. But, meanwhile, as we have seen, the lords were obliged in virtue of their feudal rights and duties to care for them, and in fact, often acquitted themselves faithfully of this duty in various parts of France by founding or subsidizing institutions for their care. The parishes or municipalities of Flanders, Artois, the Dauphiné, Provence and Brittany were placing them in nursing, supervising their care, and rearing them. And a religious order already from the twelfth century was obliged by vow to care for them.

"Far from us be the thought of wishing to dim the grandeur of the work of this benefactor of mankind," we can, therefore, say with Lallemand,[62] "but his glory is brilliant enough without having need of borrowed rays." St. Vincent has merited well of posterity for his labors in behalf of the foundlings, but his merit consists, not in inaugurating the care of these children, nor even in inventing new methods, but in introducing the charity of the Gospel, personal love, and religious valuations into the work at Paris, where the satisfying of a legal obligation had formerly been the principal, or only motive. The immediate result of his activities was seen in the renewed interest taken in the work.

[60] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 206-7; Coste, 163.
[61] Lallemand, *Hist. des enfants aband.*, 129; Gerando, ii., 148-9.
[62] *Ibid.*, 130.

The impetus given by him carried the work successfully through the stormy period of the Frondes and sustained it until the foundling asylum became a part of the *Hôpital Général,* ten years after his death.

2. *Schools*

Systematic education in secular knowledge in France dates almost from the christianization of the Gauls. Beginning with the Council of Vaison, which in 529 requests the pastors of all the parishes to receive young men into their houses and educate them in order to prepare for themselves worthy successors, the ecclesiastical councils constantly insisted on the establishment of elementary schools in towns, villages, and hamlets, to which all children had access. That the children of the poor might not be excluded from these advantages, various councils forbade the teachers to demand fees from their pupils. They were to teach gratuitously, obtaining their livelihood from the fruits of a special endowment, or from the revenues of the bishop or the chapter. The girls also frequented these schools, for, as early as 889, the Bishop of Soissons had occasion to give orders that they be kept apart from the boys. At the instigation of the Church, therefore, and under her supervision, numerous elementary schools sprang up throughout the whole of France. Paris, alone, had as many as one hundred such schools already in the fifteenth century.

In many localities the school attendance was very satisfactory; in others it left much to be desired. Compulsory education, in the present sense of the term, was not in vogue. But there were not wanting zealous bishops and pastors who earnestly exhorted all parents to send their children to school. The state, too, was beginning to see the necessity of lending her influence and authority. In the General Estates of Orleans, held in 1560, we find the nobility advocating a law to compel the country people to send their children to school under penalty of a fine.

During the Religious Wars the schools unquestionably suffered severely. Being intimately connected with the Church and subject to the direction and supervision of the clergy, the school could not remain intact where the church

had been sacked and burned. The provincial councils and the diocesan synods reëcho the bitter complaints wrung from the clergy by the sad state of affairs. Even Henry IV was compelled to acknowledge in 1590 that ignorance was rampant in his kingdom in consequence of the prolonged civil wars. It is, however, during this same period that we find renewed zeal and solicitude among the clergy for popular education. They were aroused to action, in the first place, by the decrees of the Council of Trent, as also by the realization of the danger that was threatening their schools and at the sight of the increasing depravity of the younger elements of society. A school in every city, town and village was the object of their efforts. The movement here begun continued with almost uninterrupted enthusiasm throughout the first half of the following century, culminating in the elementary schools of St. John Baptist de la Salle in the last quarter of the same century.[63]

The sixteenth century saw also the beginnings of religious congregations of both sexes which had as object the elementary education of youth. The first in the order of time are the Ursulines founded in Brescia in 1535 by the Franciscan Tertiary, St. Angela de Merici, for the education of girls. A similar institute was founded at Avignon in 1574 and began a common life in 1594. The Ursulines were brought to Paris, 1608. New foundations were soon made at Toulouse, Bordeaux, and other cities of France. Peter Fourier founded the Religious of the Congregation of Our Lady in the diocese of Toul for the education of girls in 1598. The Sisters were conducting thirty-two institutions at the time of his death in 1640. The Daughters of Our Lady of Bordeaux were founded for the same purpose at Bordeaux in 1607 by Jeanne de Lestonac, niece of Montaigne and Marquise de Montferrand, who at her death left forty flourishing educational establishments. The Religious of the

[63] For details *cf.* l'Abbé Allain, *l'Instruction primaire en France avant la Révolution,* Paris, 1881, pp. 21-39, 45-6, 49-53, 123-8, 131-2, 151, 163, 176-83, 218-24; Armand Ravelet, *Blessed J. B. de La Salle,* Paris, 1888, Book i., *Primary Education before the Time of Blessed de la Salle,* chap. ii. and iii., pp. 13-64; Patrick J. McCormick, *Education of the Laity in the Middle Ages,* series of articles in *Catholic Educational Review,* beginning November, 1911; Rt. Rev. William Turner, D. D., *Catholic Encyclopedia,* Article: *Schools.*

Visitation were founded in 1610 by St. Francis de Sales and St. Jeanne de Chantal, and already in 1641 possessed eighty-seven houses in France and Savoy. The Sisters of Christian Doctrine of Nancy were founded in 1615 for the care of the sick and the gratuitous teaching of girls. The Daughters of the Cross were established at Roye in Picardy in 1625 to conduct schools for girls. The Daughters of St. Genevieve were founded in Paris by Francisca de Blosset in 1636 to instruct little girls and train teachers for the country schools. In 1650 we see rise almost simultaneously the Sisters of St. Joseph at Le Puy and the Sisters of St. Maurice at Chartres. Among the other religious communities consecrated entirely or partly to the education of girls which trace their origin to this period we may mention the Sisters of Divine Providence, the Sisters of St. Agnes and the Sisters of Faith.

But while the congregations of women for the instruction of youth were very numerous, those of men devoted to the promotion of secular education were by far rarer and less successful.[64]

But despite these untiring efforts of the zealous bishops and individuals for the cause of popular education, we find traces of gross ignorance. Marguerite Nazeau, for example, a country girl and St. Vincent's first Daughter of Charity, had learned to read on her own initiative and, before consecrating her life to the service of the poor under the direction of the Saint, went about the country instructing others. St. Vincent seems not at all surprised that many of his novices from the country knew neither how to read nor write. He writes in a matter-of-fact way to Mlle. le Gras concerning a new postulant: "I did not think of speaking to her concerning her reading and sewing." In his conferences to the Sisters we meet with such expression as "those who do not know how to read," "a Sister . . . not knowing how to read and not having a companion who could teach

[64] For details concerning these various religious communities *cf.*, under their respective heads, Le R. P. Helyot, *Dictionnaire des Ordres Religieux, ou Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, Religieux et Militaires*, 4 vols., Migne edit., Paris, 1847-59; Dr. Max Heimbucher, *Die Orden und Kongregationen der Katholischen Kirche*, Paderborn, 1896-7; Herder's *Kirchenlexikon*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1882-1903.

her," and "the poor girls who are from the country and do not know how to read."[65]

St. Vincent de Paul at all times manifested a keen interest in primary education. It was part of the regular programme of his priests when giving missions to the people to see the schoolmasters and the schoolmistresses. They gave them "the instructions and advice necessary to acquit themselves worthily of their charges and to rear the children in virtue and inspire them with piety."[66]

Mlle. le Gras, too, paid special attention to the local schools as she passed from village to village on her tours of visitation. She ordinarily remained some time in each parish, but always under the good pleasure of the bishop and the parish priest.[67]

At times St. Vincent would announce her coming to the pastor and recommend him to receive her kindly. "Monseigneur le R. P. de Gondi," he wrote to the pastor of Bergères, "having seen the great good which Mlle. le Gras is doing at Montmirail and at Villepreux through the instruction of the girls, has desired to procure the same good for those of your parish and has asked this good lady to take the trouble to go to see you for this. She has consented in her charity to do so. She is coming then, and I beg you very humbly to assure me that you, sir, will be very glad that our Lord offers you this occasion for the good of the souls which He has committed to you. . . . And, in order that your people be informed of the purpose of Monseigneur le R. P. Gondi, you will notify them, if you please, in the sermon and urge them to send their daughters to the lodging of the said lady at the hours which she will propose to you."[68]

[65] *Lett.*, i., 198, No. 192, Feb. 24, 1638; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 41, No. 6, Aug. 16, 1641; *Ibid.*, 188, No. 19, Jan. 29, 1645; *Ibid.*, ii., 539, No. 95, Oct. 13, 1658.

[66] Abelly, ii., 22.

[67] Vincent gives her the following instructions in one of his letters: "If he [the Bishop of Chalons] thinks you ought to change something in your manner of procedure, be exact in it, if you please; if he thinks you ought to withdraw from there, do it tranquilly and gayly, since you will be doing the will of God. If he leave you in peace, continue, if you please, to instruct the young girls . . ." (*Lett.*, i., 46, No. 33). We learn from a later letter that she withdrew. *Ibid.*, 52, No. 39, Oct. 31, 1631. *Cf.* also *Ibid.*, 100, No. 93.

[68] *Ibid.*, 40-1, No. 27, Sept. 2, 1631.

The concluding remarks of the above citation insinuate a difficulty which Mlle. le Gras encountered, namely, the negligence of some parents in sending their children. St. Vincent in one of his letters to her thinks it good that she "try to have those come to school who are not accustomed to go." She should make them understand, he says, "that it is not a school, but an exercise of piety" during the days of her stay.[69] In reality she would assemble the young girls at her lodging or some other suitable place, where she "catechized them and instructed them in the duties of the Christian life."

If there was a schoolmistress in the place she instructed her in all charity to discharge her duties efficiently. If there was none, as it quite frequently happened, she strove to have a capable and reliable lady employed for the purpose. And to initiate her the better into the work, Mlle. le Gras "would commence to conduct school and to teach the little girls in her presence."[70]

Competent school-teachers, however, were hard to find.[71] This distressing plight exercised a double influence on St. Vincent's course of action. In the first place, it prompted him to make teaching, especially in the country districts, one of the two principal aims of the Daughters of Charity.[72] In his special rules for the Sisters of the Parishes[73] he prescribes that one of the two who are working in a parish shall with the consent of the superioress, "conduct school for the poor little girls of the parish," provided the care of the sick be not thereby impaired. She is also granted the liberty of requesting the assistance of her companion if there be need and if the care of the sick permit it. This rule was drafted

[69] *Ibid.*, 36-7, No. 23, May 4, 1631.

[70] Abelly, i., 160.

[71] Vincent writes, for example, to Mlle. le Gras under date of July 10, 1632: "I think it opportune, indeed, to establish a schoolmistress at Villeneuve, but where shall we get her? . . . Certainly I see no means especially within the short time you have to see Mlle. d'Attichy. . . . You will meanwhile give the mothers of your scholars hopes that you will send them a teacher as soon as possible." *Lett.*, i., 63-4, No. 50. *Cf.* also *Ibid.*, 208, No. 203, To M. Bécu, Priest of the Mission at Richelieu, June 2, 1638.

[72] *Conférences aux Filles de la Charité*, i., 42, No. 6, Aug. 16, 1641. *Cf.* also Abelly, i., 172.

[73] Ch. xviii., art. 16, 6°, *Conférences aux Filles de la Charité*, ii., 629, No. 105, Oct. 19, 1659.

only after the method had proven successful in practice. In 1638, for example, Vincent sent two Sisters to Richelieu to assist the Ladies of Charity in the care of the sick, both of whom were at the same time able to teach school. He gave instructions that one could be employed for this latter purpose when the number of the sick had diminished, while the other should be returned. A few weeks later he was able to say of them: "The two Sister servants of the poor whom we have sent thither from here are doing wonders, the one in behalf of the sick, the other for the instruction of the girls."[74]

Moreover, St. Vincent opened the school of Saint-Laurent at Paris in 1639 in concert with M. Lestocq, the pastor, and one at Fontainebleau in 1646. And very soon the Daughters of Charity were conducting primary schools in many of the towns and villages of France. By the year 1655 they were already successfully engaged in similar work in Poland under the protection and with the assistance of the queen of Poland.[75]

We have already seen the provisions St. Vincent made for the training of his Daughters of Charity in preparation for this type of work [pp. 141-3]. We shall merely mention here that, apart from private study and training under the direction of the more educated members of the community, the Sisters were at times, at least, sent elsewhere to perfect themselves in methods of teaching. We know, for example, that a certain Sister Frances had been sent to Narbonne "to learn an excellent method followed there for the instruction of youth." "She has learned it," St. Vincent assures us, "and makes use of it to the great edification of all."[76]

The second influence which the dearth of teachers in the rural districts had in molding St. Vincent's course of action is seen in the turn he gave to certain newly established institutions at Paris. The Daughters of the Cross, as mentioned above, were founded at Roye in Picardy in 1625 for

[74] *Lett.*, i., 221, No. 214, To M. Lambert at Richelieu, Oct. 1, 1638; *Ibid.*, 225, No. 216, To M. Lucas, Priest of the Mission at Joigny, Oct. 18, 1638.

[75] Ravelet, 31, 78; *Lett.*, iii., 163, No. 1121, To M. Ozenne, Supr. at Warsaw, May 7, 1655; *Ibid.*, 170, No. 1127, June 4, 1655; *Lett.*, iv., 445, No. 1921, To the Queen of Poland, Aug. 22, 1659.

[76] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 191, No. 3, July 24, 1660.

the education of girls. In 1636 they were compelled to flee on account of the war and to seek refuge in Paris. Here they were received by Mme. Marie l'Huillier de Villeneuve, one of St. Vincent's first and most active workers. She assigned them a house at Bric-Comte-Robert, a few leagues from Paris, to which a second in the city was soon added. Acting on the advice of St. Vincent and several other pious and prudent men, Mme. de Villeneuve broadened the original scope of the institution. She continued the education of poor girls, but now began to recruit and train teachers for the rural schools.

Another of St. Vincent's early workers, Francisca de Blosset, founded a religious congregation, the Daughters of St. Genevieve, in the parish Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet at Paris, in 1636. It also had as one of its principal aims the training of teachers for the schools in the country. A third community, the Daughters of the Holy Family, was begun in 1661 by Mme. de Miramion, who, too, was one of St. Vincent's Ladies of Charity. St. Vincent had assisted in drafting its constitutions before his death. Its aims were practically the same as those of the Daughters of St. Genevieve.[77]

St. Vincent's programme of education was that of his age. He himself was highly educated. His first associates in the Congregation of the Mission, too, were learned men. Still, as Abelly assures us, he was ordinarily distrustful of all that surpassed the mediocre in learning if it were not accompanied by a true and sincere humility. Those possessing less talents, natural or acquired, he thought, were better disposed to trust in God, and, in consequence, better suited for the Congregation than others who confided more in their own accomplishments and less in God.[78]

He saw the necessity of education and advocated its pursuance, but only in so far as it contributed to practical

[77] Helyot, i., 1173-7; Idem, ii., 1011-9; Heimbucher, ii., 428, 438-9; Coste, 89. The Daughters of the Holy Cross of Margarete Senaux were founded at Paris in 1639 for the education of girls and training of teachers; but there is no trace that St. Vincent was connected with them. Vincent showed great interest also in the Seminary of the Daughters of Providence; they, too, trained the better qualified of their wards to become teachers, but not in the rural schools [See p. 251].

[78] Abelly, i., 409-12; Idem., iii., 27.

utility.[79] It is not that a priest and a missionary ought not possess knowledge, he tells his confrères, but only so much as is necessary to perform the duties of his ministry and not to satisfy his curiosity and ambitions; it is necessary to study and to acquire learning, but with sobriety. He expressed practically the same views to his seminarians on one occasion at the beginning of their course of studies. "Knowledge is necessary, my brethren," he said, "and woe to those who do not employ their time well! But let us fear and, if I dare say it, tremble; for those who have talent have reason to fear! *Scientia inflat* ["knowledge puffeth up." 1 Cor. 8, 1]. Who have it not, it is still worse if they do not humble themselves."[80]

In 1634 M. de Coudray, a priest of the Mission well versed in the Hebrew and Syriac languages, was at Rome. He was asked to assist in the translation of the Syriac Bible into Latin. At this juncture St. Vincent wrote to him as follows: "I beg you not to resolve upon the proposition which one has made to you to work on this version. I know well, it will serve to satisfy the curiosity of some but certainly not, as I believe, the salvation of the souls of the poor people for which the providence of God has had the design from all eternity of employing you. It ought to be sufficient for you, sir, that by the grace of God you have employed three or four years to learn Hebrew and that you know enough of it to sustain the cause of the Son of God in His original language and to confound his enemies in this kingdom."[81]

We are not surprised, therefore, that Vincent did not

[79] Richelieu's views in this connection, as expressed in his *Testament Politique* (Part I., ch. ii., sect. X., pp. 124-33), are worthy of note. The fostering of science, he contends, is the affair of the State. Education ought ordinarily to be restricted to three classes or grades, just sufficient to expel that utter ignorance detrimental to the army and trades alike. The especially talented may be permitted to pursue higher studies in the large cities. If all were highly educated, they would spend their time in useless wrangling and refuse to engage in industry, commerce, and agriculture and to render obedience in the army. These views of the great statesman are in perfect accord with his principle that all things should be brought into the service of the State, and should be fostered only in so far as they serve that purpose.

[80] Abelly, i., 241, n. 2; Idem, iii., 328; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 391, No. 101, Mar. 14, 1659. See also pp. 142-3.

[81] Abelly, ii., 42; *Lett.*, i., 84-5, No. 73, Feb. 16, 1634.

advocate a high standard of primary education. Abelly summarizes the question by saying that the Daughters of Charity were employed in a number of places "to instruct the young girls, teaching them above all to know and to serve God and to acquit themselves of the principal duties of the Christian life." These duties included moral obligations, but also such manual work as spinning and sewing.[82]

St. Vincent gives expression to his views on the schooling of poor boys in a letter to M. Coglée, the superior at Sedan, under date of April 13, 1656. A priest of the Mission had urged the Ladies of Charity at Paris to furnish money wherewith to buy books for the use of the poor children frequenting his school. The Ladies consented that he use for that purpose, for three or four months, one or two crowns per month of the money they sent to Sedan for the poor. St. Vincent, however, is of the opinion "that it is not opportune to continue it, because ordinarily it is of but little service to youth to begin the study of Latin when they have not the means of making some progress, as is the case when the parents cannot give them the necessary things, unless there is some good talent, which, making itself known as such by extraordinary advancement, gives occasion to some charitable person to assist it in perfecting itself. With this exception the majority are to stop midway. It is preferable that they learn a trade in good season; and this is the good you ought to procure for these poor children, urging their parents to place them in some apprenticeship, or, rather, praying God that He inspire the Catholic ladies of the city to do as those of Rheims have done, who have united for a number of good works," and, among them, the placing of poor children in apprenticeships.[83]

St. Vincent, therefore, while fostering popular education, contributed nothing of importance to educational thought, the curriculum or methods of teaching in the primary schools. His most conspicuous and resourceful contribution was the directing of the efforts of the Daughters of Charity into the field of education among the poor. Others, it is true, were following similar lines of work. But while these

[82] See Industrial Training, p. 232; Abelly, i., 172.
[83] *Lett.*, iii. 259-60, No. 1219.

often limited their activities to the cities, or were restricted to a certain type of children in need, or soon drifted from their original purpose, the Daughters of Charity devoted their efforts principally to the poor children of the country districts and adhered to the work. But more fundamental and original, as constituting the primitive models of our normal schools, were his efforts for the training of teachers for the rural schools through the Daughters of the Cross, the Daughters of St. Genevieve, and the Daughters of the Holy Family.

In judging the views and efforts of St. Vincent in the cause of primary education, we must bear in mind that he was influenced not only by the general educational standards of his age,[84] but also by the general economic conditions of France and, in particular, of the class of people among whom he worked and whose main concern was to possess the bare means of livelihood.

3. *Industrial Training*

The term of apprenticeship in the various trades at this time was ordinarily from three to six or eight years. In exceptional cases it was but two months; in others twelve years. The duration generally stood in inverse proportion to the money paid. Thus, for example, to learn the baker's trade it required two years and sixty-four francs, or six months and two hundred and twenty-five francs. Parents, unable or unwilling to make the required payment, sacrificed for an additional year or two the free services of their children. According to a royal ordinance of 1581, the sons of masters were required to serve but one half the regular period. For the longest of the apprenticeships, when the trade demanded more skill than strength, apprentices were hired very young, though the usual age was ten to twelve years. We find them taken, however, in the lighter trades at six years of age. The statutes of the master and merchant

[84] As late as 1839 Gerando (vol. ii., 481) could say in general of the elementary schools of France that "one will find that the children there contract some habits of application, that they there submit to the yoke of an imperfect discipline, that they there learn more or less to read, write, and cipher. But what is otherwise the culture which their reason and their character receive there?"

tapestry workers, for example, had occasion to forbid taking them *below* that age.[85]

There were two classes of apprentices; viz., the sons of masters, and strangers and illegitimate sons of masters. The former were unrestricted as to numbers. Of the latter each master was allowed one or two, very rarely three or more. It was at times forbidden in particular cases to engage any apprentices; v.g., for ten years, or until the workers had decreased to a certain number. A triple contract covering all details intervened. It bound the father, the apprentice, and the master, and required the consent of the jurors of the labor corporation. A payment was also demanded on this occasion as an admission fee into the union. This at times became excessive. It was reduced to one half by a royal edict of 1577, which, however, had but little effect.

The father promised to cede his rights over his son for the requisite number of years and to pay a certain sum in money or in kind. The apprentice promised to remain faithful to his master. The apprentice entered the house of the master and became one of the family, though at times his condition was but little better than that of a servant. The master was held responsible for the intellectual and moral education of his charge. The master had the right to sell him to another master. If he ran away he could be returned by force, or the master exacted an idemnity and no other master could take him.

Upon completing his apprenticeship, the young artisan passed into the ranks of the journeymen. Here the majority of the workers remained. The class of masters was becoming more and more exclusive. In the thirteenth century every graduate from the apprenticeship was a master. But since the fourteenth century he had to pass through the intermediate stage of the journeymen, and, if he were not the son of a master, he was generally detained there by the difficult and costly masterpiece which was ordinarily a pre-

[85] The data on the general condition of apprenticeship at this period have been drawn from such works as Levasseur, *Histoire des classes ouvrières,* etc.; Martin Saint-Léon, *Histoire des corporations de métiers,* etc.; d'Avenel, *Paysans et ouvriers,* etc.; Allain, *l'Instruction primaire,* etc.

requisite for the mastership. There was, therefore, a studied discrimination against the poor, in favor of the sons of the masters, and a conscious effort to exclude them from the masters' ranks.

Dependent children had been receiving industrial training in their institutions since the middle of the fourteenth century. In the boys' elementary schools of the age, too, we already note traces of industrial training. Rabelais (1483-1553) gives the advice that the student visit all the shops where the trades of that period are being plied. Also in different parts of Europe there were already institutions or manual training schools. According to an Act of 1575, for example, one of the purposes of the English Houses of Correction was "that the young be trained to work." A similar institution was opened at Dantzig in 1629.[86]

Industrial training was a logical phase of St. Vincent's practical programme of relief. We have already remarked his insistence on the duty of earning one's livelihood. But that the adult may be permeated with a sense of the obligation to work and at the same time know how to comply with it to the best advantage to himself and to those dependent upon him, the youth must early learn to realize its full import and at the same time acquire a practical knowledge of the methods of complying with it. In other words, he must learn some useful trade at an early age.

St. Vincent had ample opportunity of giving a practical turn to these his ideas during the many years of his charitable career. Abelly sums up his whole policy in this respect when he says of the foundlings that, "when they advance a little in age, they [the Daughters of Charity, who were in direct charge of them] have them busy themselves with some little work to avoid idleness while waiting for the providence of God to present an occasion of providing for them and of placing them in a position to subsist through their own work and industry."[87] St. Vincent, therefore, had

[86] Gerando, ii., 88; Allain, 164; Compayré, 84; Lallemand, iv., part I., 235, 239.

[87] Abelly, i., 212. *Cf.* also *Ibid.*, 210; Idem, ii., 470; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 206.

his charges learn to keep themselves busy from their earliest years, not for the sake of any material profit that might accrue from their work but that they might be reared from the beginning in an atmosphere of honest work. And when they were of competent age, they were apprenticed in some trade suitable to their age.[88]

In St. Vincent's three constitutions which have reference to relief of poverty[89] we find the prescription that "the children shall be apprenticed in a trade as soon as they have reached the competent age," or, as another expresses it, "as regards the young boys, one shall apprentice them in some light trade, as that of weaver, which does not cost but three or four crowns for each apprentice." The "competent age" and the "young boys" mentioned here are boys of about eight years of age, as we are able to glean from one of the constitutions.

No further details are available concerning the nature of the apprenticeship, but we are justified in holding that such a boy, once apprenticed, followed the ordinary course of an apprentice of that time.

It was especially during the relief of the devastated provinces that the poor boys and orphans were provided for in this manner, either in one of the cities of the provinces or upon their arrival at Paris. At Rheims, for example, the Ladies of Charity placed nearly a hundred and twenty such youths in respectable and suitable trades within less than eight months.[90]

St. Vincent did not restrict his efforts along these lines to the boys. He rejoices to hear that one of the Sisters at

[88] The placing of dependent children in trades as a method of relieving poverty received legal sanction in France as early as 1362 in virtue of letters patent issued in approbation of a confraternity conducting a home for three to five hundred homeless children. In England, Queen Elizabeth and James I had already prescribed that the church wardens and the inspectors of the parishes place boys in trades, supervise them during their term of apprenticeship, and see to the execution of the conditions of the contract. Gerando, ii., 422, 540-1.

[89] *Règl. de la Confrérie de Char. d'Hommes* (Folleville, Oct. 23, 1620), *Règl. de la Conf. de Char. d'Hommes et de Femmes* (Courboing, June 19, 1622), *Règl. pour une Conf. de Char. d'Hommes et de Femmes et pour l'organisation d'une manufacture*, *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 412-433.

[90] *Lett.*, iii., 260, No. 1219, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, Apr. 13, 1656 *Cf.* also, *e.g.*, *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 203, Confer. at Gen. Assembly of Ladies of Char., July 11, 1657; Abelly, ii., 468, 502.

Liancourt knows how to make lace, for, he adds, "she will be able to teach it to the poor people."[91]

The daughters of the nobility, who had been removed from danger in Champagne, were placed under the care of the Sisters of Sainte-Marie at Rheims, where they were "instructed in the fear of God and trained to occupy themselves with some little work." During the same period, St. Vincent gave orders that the Irish girls and widows, refugees in the city of Troyes, be taken to the Hospital of Saint-Nicholas "where they learned to spin and sew." And again, the parish priest of Ham writes thus to St. Vincent: "The missionary whom you have sent us . . . has left us wheat and money to feed and maintain the orphan girls to whom one teaches a trade which within a few months will render them capable of gaining their own livelihood."[92]

But St. Vincent's interest in industrial training went still further. A constitution has come down to us which he drafted for a manual training school. The constitution naturally presupposed the existence of such a school, or, at least, the definite determination to found one, but there is no evidence stating where the school was situated nor any other circumstances, except that the making of cloth was to be taught there. The confraternity to which the constitution in its entirety refers, is one composed of both men and women. Its general organization does not differ materially from those considered in the first section of this treatise. As is usual in such confraternities, the care of the sick poor is entrusted to the women, that of the able-bodied poor to the men. The care and direction of the school fall, therefore, to the men. Its entire direction is in the hands of the officers, who comprise the parish priest, a commander, two assistants or advisers, a treasurer, and a visitor.[93]

According to the constitution, the members are to rent a house where all the poor boys of the city and its depending villages shall "live and work under the direction of an ecclesiastic and the guidance of a master workman."

[91] *Lett.*, i., 61, No. 47, To Mlle. le Gras.

[92] Abelly, ii., 522, 525, 527-8.

[93] *Règl. pour une Confér. de Char. d'Hommes et de Femmes et pour l'organisation d'une manufacture, Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 427-33.

Here, as in all his charitable undertakings, St. Vincent lays great stress on the moral training of his charges. The ecclesiastic in charge is instructed to teach the apprentices "the catechism and Christian piety" for at least one half hour in the church after Vespers on all feast days, and at 1 p. m., again for at least one half hour, on Tuesdays and Fridays at the factory home. He shall conduct them "two by two to Mass and to Vespers on feast days and Sundays, and to Vespers only on Saturdays and on the vigils of great feasts." He shall also induce the boys to receive the sacraments on the first Sunday of each month and on the solemn feasts. It is the further charge of the ecclesiastic to be with the boys during their dinner and supper.

The master workman's only duty is to teach his trade to the apprentices. He is forbidden to interfere with the direction and management of the institution. Apart from these two items the constitution is silent on the obligations of the master. All details concerning the method, etc., of his instructions are, therefore, left to his own discretion, or, perhaps, are to be specified by the officers as circumstances demand.

One of the members of the confraternity is to visit the establishment daily in order to render what service he finds necessary, to carry out any particular order the officers may have given him, and to note the needs and disorders, which must be reported to the officers. In this way the managing board remains in constant touch with the work.

Neither the ecclesiastic nor the master workman is empowered under any condition to admit or dismiss the apprentices. This is the exclusive prerogative of the board of directors. The apprentices, together with their parents, must oblige themselves by oath to teach their trade free of charge to the future poor boys of the city who will be charges of the confraternity, provided the officers of the confraternity call upon them to do so.

The daily routine of the institution is thus traced out by St. Vincent: 4:00 a. m., rising; 4:30-5:00 a. m., morning prayer, followed by work until the first bell rings for Mass; they will attend this Mass in a body; 8:00 a. m., breakfast; 12:00 noon, dinner in silence and with reading; 3:30 p. m.,

lunch; 7:00 p. m., supper and recreation; 7:45 p. m., night prayer and examination of conscience; 8:00 p. m., retiring.

The officers of the confraternity, at their monthly meetings held after Vespers on the first Sunday of each month, shall treat also the affairs of the factory school. Each officer shall report on what he has done by reason of his office; problems and methods shall be proposed, discussed and disposed of by a plurality of votes. The institution shall be supported from the treasury of the confraternity, which, in turn, shall receive its funds from a part of the annual revenue accruing to the hospital of the city, from the collections taken up by the members at church on Sundays and feast days, and from the contributions to the poor boxes placed in the inns of the city.

CHAPTER III

Delinquents

1. *Prison Work*

St. Vincent de Paul was led to undertake work among the prisoners by the logical course of events. After an absence of five months as parish priest of Châtillon-les-Dombes, where he organized his first confraternity of charity, he returned to the Gondi household toward the end of December, 1617. At Châtillon he had had experience both in the care of souls on a larger scale and in organized charity. Utilizing this double experience, he began to give missions and organize confraternities of charity on the Gondi estate. M. de Gondi, who was General of the Galleys, wished to have also the galley slaves under his jurisdiction to participate in Vincent's charity. In consequence of his recommendation and petition to Louis XIII, St. Vincent was appointed royal almoner, or chaplain, of the galleys of France in virtue of a special brevet issued to that effect Febr. 8, 1619. This appointment was confirmed Jan. 16, 1644, by Louis XIV, who at the same time, conferred the office in perpetuity on the superior general of the priests of the Mission and empowered St. Vincent to delegate the superior of the priests at Marseilles during his absence to depose and replace chaplains who neglected their duties.[1]

In 1622 St. Vincent went to Marseilles to learn by personal observation the needs of the convicts. The spectacle that met his eyes beggars description. It is thus referred to by Abelly: "The criminals doubly miserable, more burdened with the insupportable weight of their sins than with the weight of their chains, depressed with the miseries and pains which drove from them the care and the thought of their salvation and prompted them constantly to blasphemy

[1] Abelly, i., 405-7, *Pièces Justificatives*, I.

and despair. It was a true picture of hell, where one did not hear God spoken of except to deny or dishonor Him, and where the evil disposition of these captives rendered all their sufferings futile and without fruit."[2] Their condition at Paris was, if possible, even more deplorable. They were locked up in dungeons of the Conciergerie and other prisons, "where they lay at times for a long while before being sent to Marseilles, consumed by vermin, enfeebled by languor and want, and entirely neglected both in body and soul." If they became sick while serving their sentence at sea, they "always remained attached to the chain on the galleys, where they were preyed upon by vermin, depressed with anguish and almost consumed with putrefaction and infection."[3]

Such were the moral and material miseries which St. Vincent discovered, and which he determined to alleviate in virtue of his royal appointment. He immediately undertook the task of relief. In order to gain the good will of the convicts, he patiently listened to their complaints and manifested the greatest compassion for their sufferings. He urged them to turn their bodily miseries to their spiritual advantage and urged the officers by prayers and remonstrances to treat them more humanely.

Returning to Paris, he remonstrated with M. de Gondi, holding him directly responsible for the treatment given the convicts while awaiting their transfer to Marseilles. At the same time he proposed a plan of rendering them corporal and spiritual relief, which M. de Gondi approved and empowered him to execute. Accordingly, in 1622, St. Vincent rented a house in the suburb Saint-Honoré, whither the convicts were transferred under strong guard. Here he frequently visited them, consoling and instructing them and preparing them for the worthy reception of the sacraments. When he was occupied with other duties, he obtained the services of two priests, interested in his work, to replace him. They lodged at the institution. He also provided for their corporal relief, but no details are recorded.

St. Vincent saw that if this work was to endure, it must be established on a firmer financial basis. Hence he enlisted

[2] Abelly, i., 92.
[3] *Ibid.*, 94, 191.

the interest of the king and of the officials of the city, and obtained from them in 1632 an ancient castle between the gate of Saint-Bernard and the Seine.

The moral needs of the convicts in the new institution were at first cared for by St. Vincent through the priests of the Mission. Later the ecclesiastics of the parish church of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet were entrusted with this phase of the work with the annual salary of 300 livres. This, however, did not prevent Vincent from urging the priests of the "Tuesday Conference" to conduct missions for them from time to time, especially when the convicts were there in large numbers, or before leaving for Marseilles. In fact, the instruction and the Confessions of the poor prisoners are enumerated among the special employments of the priests of the "Tuesday Conference." Special reference is made to their work among the political suspects and prisoners detained in the Bastille. These prisoners were often socially prominent. Their bodily needs were being amply cared for, but they were being neglected spiritually. Through the intervention of St. Vincent, a priest of the Conference was permitted to visit them and urge them to lead a Christian life.

For a number of years, St. Vincent contributed also to the material relief of the convicts from the resources of St. Lazare. At the same time, he occasionally invited persons of social prominence to visit them and perform some acts of charity in their behalf. Mlle. le Gras likewise volunteered her services and "rendered all kinds of charitable offices," assisting them from her own alms. But since she was the superioress of the confraternity of the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, within whose limits the convicts were housed, Vincent conceived the idea of having her suggest to the Ladies that they include also the poor convicts in their distribution of alms.[4] From this time forth, to assist the convicts was always considered one of the purposes of the Ladies of Charity.

A special "Society for the Prisoners" was founded by Mme. de Lamoignon, one of the Ladies of Charity, with the

[4] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 8-9, No. 2089, To Mlle. le Gras.

advice of St. Vincent. Prominent persons of both sexes, ecclesiastics, and magistrates comprised the membership. They obliged themselves to visit, assist, and console the convicts, and to obtain the release of those who were imprisoned for debts. The king gave a substantial donation each year, while, on each Palm Sunday, the Archbishop of Paris paid the ransom for one prisoner presented by the society.[5]

In 1639 the institution was assured by bequest an annual income of 6,000 livres. At the same time the Daughters of Charity began to be employed in the service of the convicts, especially of the sick. "Two or three" of them were engaged for the purpose in 1646,[6] and this seems to have been the usual number. Abelly assures us that they exercised "the works of mercy in a very high degree," and that St. Vincent gave them special regulations conformable to their occupation, but we have no details regarding the methods they used.

While the work among the convicts was thus being carried on at Paris, St. Vincent directed his attention also to Marseilles. He urged upon Richelieu, the prime minister, who had in the meantime become general of the galleys, and upon his niece, the Duchess of Aiguillon, the extreme necessity of a hospital where the sick convicts could be properly cared for. Through their mediation and with the aid of the Archbishop of Marseilles and a beneficent layman, a hospital was erected in that city.

By his influence at court, St. Vincent procured for it a royal endowment. 12,000 livres were assigned to it in virtue of letters patent issued in 1645. The priests of the Mission established at Marseilles were given the spiritual direction of the hospital and, conjointly with four prominent laymen, also temporal administration. The same letters patent empowered the superior of the Mission at Marseilles to name and depose the almoners of the galleys and to oblige them to live in community in the house of the Mission when the

[5] Coste, 63. For similar societies before and during this time in France and other countries, *cf., v.g.,* Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.,* iv., part II., pp. 164 sqq.

[6] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 497, *Memoir addressed to Archb. of Paris by St. Vincent to obtain episcopal approbation for the Daughters of Charity.*

galleys were in port, in order to fit themselves the better for the exercise of their functions.[7]

A glimpse at the benefits accruing to the galley slaves from this hospital can be had from a letter addressed to St. Vincent in 1645 by one of its founders. He writes that after its establishment the officers in charge of the galleys were very reluctant to commit the sick convicts to the hospital for treatment, and then continues: "Indeed, I know not how to express to you the joy these poor convicts experience when they see themselves transferred from this hell to the hospital which they call a paradise; already upon their entrance one sees them half cured of their ailment because one frees them of the vermin with which they come covered, one washes their feet, then puts them in a bed somewhat softer than the wood on which they are accustomed to lie. And they are all enraptured at seeing themselves put to bed, served, and treated with a little more charity than on the galleys."[8]

On account of the pest from 1649 to 1655, the greater part of the galleys were transferred from Marseilles to Toulon. At this time St. Vincent wrote thus to the superior at Marseilles: "I am well pleased with the voyage which you say you intend to make with one of the administrators [of the hospital] in behalf of the poor convicts who fall sick on the galleys, and shall be very glad either that they be taken to the hospital at Marseilles as they become sick, or that there be some place at Toulon where they can be sent in order to be better assisted and relieved. As to the former, I shall tell you that I doubt very much if M. de la Ferrière wishes to grant it on account of the fear he may entertain that they escape while being conducted from Toulon to Marseilles and from Marseilles back to Toulon."[9]

As a matter of fact, the sick seem to have been detained at Toulon throughout the period of the pest. A house was rented to care for them there and a priest of the Mission was

[7] Abelly, i., 190-2; *Lett.*, ii., 82, No. 590, To M. Portail, Missionary at Marseilles, April 24, 1648; *Ibid.*, 84, No. 592, May 8, 1648.

[8] Abelly, i., 192-3.

[9] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 110, No. 3089, To M. Get, Supr. at Marseilles, Dec. 11, 1654.

usually present to attend to their moral needs, and, at the same time, to see that their bodily wants were properly cared for.

St. Vincent de Paul rendered another service to the convicts of the galleys which was highly appreciated by them. Relatives and friends wishing to assist them gave their donation to Vincent. He would promptly forward it to the prospective recipient. But instead of sending each small amount singly, he deposited a sum of money from time to time with the superior of the Mission at Marseilles, and as the donations were given him for the convicts, he instructed the superior by letter to give the amount of the donation to the respective convict, if he was at Marseilles. If, however, the galleys were at Toulon, as during this period they generally were, he instructed the priest at Toulon to advance the money and then draw that amount from the account at Marseilles. Of the 99 letters[10] which St. Vincent wrote to M. Get, the superior at Marseilles, between Jan. 26, 1657 and Sept. 9, 1660,[11] nearly half contained instructions to give money to specified convicts. The sums usually consisted of a few livres. Occasionally they rose as high as 30 to 50, and once to 316 livres. On one occasion he gave instructions, in accordance with the wishes of the donor, that 5 sous per day be allowed a convict for three months. It is not stated for what purposes the galley slaves might use the money thus obtained. St. Vincent also at times had letters exchanged between the convicts and their relatives through himself and the superior at Marseilles.[12]

We have seen that St. Vincent promoted the spiritual welfare of the convicts wherever possible. He was obliged to render them this aid in virtue of the contract of foundation drawn up by M. and Mme. de Gondi, which formed the real beginning of the Congregation of the Mission. The contract reads: "They shall be obliged . . . to assist the poor convicts spiritually in order that they may profit by

[10] *Lett.*, iii and iv., *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 149.

[11] It seems that St. Vincent adopted this method only with the former date.

[12] *Lett.*, iii., 601, No. 1494, To M. Get, Supr. at Marseilles, Oct. 5, 1657, and *Lett.*, iv., 46, No. 1618, To M. Get, April 5, 1658.

their bodily pains, and in order that the said Lord General [M. de Gondi] may satisfy that to which he in no way considers himself obliged in virtue of his charge—a charity which he intends to be continued in perpetuity in the future for the poor convicts by the said ecclesiastics for good and just considerations."[13]

In order the better to fulfill the obligation herein contained, Vincent had missions conducted on the various galleys. The first of its kind was given to the convicts assembled at Bordeaux in 1623.[14] He obtained the assistance of a number of religious of the city, two of whom he assigned to each galley. They worked with enthusiasm and success, disposing the criminals to reconcile themselves with God and to "accept their penalties with patience and in satisfaction for their sins."[15]

But it seems to have been only twenty years later that priests were appointed to give missions regularly on the galleys at Marseilles and later at Toulon. The need of these missions is attested by the Archbishop of Marseilles in a letter to the Duchess of Aiguillon, dated Mar. 6, 1643.[16] He writes: "You would be astonished, madame, if you knew the number of those who have spent three, four, five, and ten years without Confession; and there were found some who had remained in this state for the space of twenty-five years and who protested their unwillingness to do anything as long as they remained in captivity." Their minds were "not only ignorant," as we learn from the same letter, "but also hardened in their sins and . . . [they] did not wish to hear the things of God spoken of, being embittered to the extreme against their miserable condition."

This letter also assures us that "the fruit [of a mission conducted in 1643] has absolutely surpassed the expectation one had conceived. . . . Little by little the grace of God, through the mediation of these ecclesiastics, has so softened their hearts that they now show as much contrition as

[13] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 438.

[14] The year previous the galleys had been transferred to this city from Marseilles to meet the armed forces of the Huguenots.

[15] Abelly, i., 95-6; Idem, iii., 396; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 432, No. 104, May 2, 1659.

[16] Abelly, ii., 48-50.

formerly they manifested obstinacy." Some months later the superior at Marseilles assured St. Vincent that "this task is laborious; but the remarkable change noticeable in these poor convicts, which gives us all possible satisfaction, goes far to encourage us to sustain it."[17]

St. Vincent himself tells us the secret of his power over the hearts of criminals. "Even the convicts," he writes to a confrère, admonishing him to be more patient and cordial toward those with whom he has to deal, "with whom I have staid, are not gained otherwise; and when I happened to address them sharply, I spoilt all; and on the contrary when I praised them for their resignation, when I compassionated them in their sufferings, and when I told them they were fortunate in suffering their purgatory in this world; when I kissed their chains, sympathized with their pains and testified grief for their disgraces,—then they listened to me, they gave glory to God and put themselves on the way to salvation." He then asks the confrère to pray to God that all the missionaries may adopt "this practice of treating our fellow men kindly, humbly, and charitably, in public and in private, and even the sinners and the obdurate, without ever using invectives, reproaches, or rude words against anyone."[18]

St. Vincent expresses his attitude toward the work for the galley slaves when he says in a letter to Mlle. le Gras: "Charity toward these poor convicts is of incomparable merit before God." On another occasion, when writing to a confrère, he calls a charitable disposition toward the convicts "a grace [of God] so precious that nothing greater is found on earth." And again we read in one of his conferences to the Daughters of Charity: "What good fortune for you to serve them,—those who have been delivered into the hands of persons who have no pity! I have seen them, these poor people, treated as beasts. God at last has taken compassion on them; they have moved His pity, in consequence of which His goodness has done two things in their favor: the first, to procure a house for them [at Paris], and the

[17] Idem, ii., 50.
[18] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 7-8, No. 2087.

second to dispose things so that they be served by His own Daughters, for to say Daughters of Charity is to say Daughters of God."[19]

St. Vincent, however, did not wish that his priests limit their interest to the galley slaves, but that they extend their aid to other criminals as well. He tells a confrère that "it is the characteristic of priests to procure and show mercy to criminals," and admonishes him never to refuse assistance to those who implore his mediation, "especially when there is more misfortune than malice in their crime." "There is in St. Augustine an epistle on this matter (I do not recall which it is)," he continues, "which shows that to deliver sinners and prisoners by way of intercession and indulgence neither foments vice nor authorizes it; and shows that it is of the seemliness and of the charity of ecclesiastics to plead for them. You can do it then when you see that the case merits it, and you can anticipate the thoughts of the judges by telling them that it is not your purpose to protect crime but to exercise mercy, begging it for the guilty and demanding it for the innocent according to your state."[20]

He expressed his views on the same subject a number of years earlier. Among the duties expected of the Mission Priests in virtue of their vocation, he enumerates the visiting of "civil prisoners, and also criminals," but he adds, only "after the evidence has been presented against them, or, at least, after the proceedings have been instituted, and not sooner, for fear that they [the defendants] will complain against you if they are convicted of something they confided or confessed to you, or that the judges will complain against you if they do not confess the truth."[21]

2. *Juvenile Delinquents*

St. Vincent did not restrict his activities to convicts and adult criminals, but devoted his attention also to juvenile delinquents. These were boys, many of prominent families, who, by their drunkenness, blasphemies, immoralities, tru-

[19] *Ibid.*, 8, No. 1089; *Lett.*, ii., 181, No. 665, To M. Dufour, Confrère, Nov. 18, 1649; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 98, No. 62, Oct. 18, 1655.

[20] *Lett.*, iv., 259-60, No. 1780, To M. Cabel, Supr. at Sedan, Dec. 28, 1658.

[21] *Lett.*, i., 470, 5°, No. 407, To M. Grimal, Supr. at Sedan, Feb. 13, 1644.

ancy, robberies, and assaults on their parents and others, were "the children of sorrow for their fathers and mothers, the disgrace and ruin of their houses." Their parents had employed in vain all reasonable means of correction and as a last resource resolved to deprive them of the liberty they abused.

They accordingly brought them to Saint-Lazare with the permission of the magistrate which apparently St. Vincent demanded in each case. This permission amounted in reality to a commitment by the magistrate, which he or the Parliament alone could repeal.[22]

The boys, as far as can be learned, were received without question or investigation. We adduce the following facts in illustration from a letter of St. Vincent to M. Demurard, treasurer of France. M. Demurard's eldest son, with whom St. Vincent was acquainted, came to Vincent and asked if he would take at Saint-Lazare a youth who was rebellious to the wishes of his father. Vincent, as usual, consented provided the magistrate's permission be obtained. Only after the boy had been committed to Saint-Lazare did St. Vincent learn that he was the same M. Demurard's younger son whose rebellion consisted in his determination to quit the Seminary of Saint-Charles[23] and to marry—a step which St. Vincent himself, shortly before, had advised him to take if he thought fit after making a spiritual retreat and taking proper advice. St. Vincent wrote the letter to the father, from which we are quoting, assuring him that the Parliament would condone the commitment upon hearing the true state of affairs, and begged him to restore his son to favor.[24]

The youths underwent strict confinement in a building apart from the main structure of Saint-Lazare. No one from outside was permitted to visit them except with the permission of those who had placed them there. And even of the members of Saint-Lazare, only those who were charged with their care ever saw or knew them. This strict seclusion

[22] *Lett.*, iv., 370-2, No. 1861. To M. Demurard, Treasurer of France, June 14, 1659.

[23] A preparatory seminary of Saint-Lazare founded by St. Vincent himself.

[24] *Ibid.*

was evidently a precautionary measure to safeguard the good name of the boys' families.

Certain of the lay brothers were assigned to care for their nourishment and other bodily needs. St. Vincent considered it a matter of justice that they be given fair treatment and good food, and not "meat or wine that was left over from the preceding evening"; he demanded that they be given the same food as the priests of the community. Justice demanded further, he said, that those who paid more receive something more than those who paid less.[25]

Some of the priests were charged with their moral welfare. They visited and consoled them and exhorted them "to change their life, to abandon vice and turn to virtue, representing to them the temporal and eternal evils of their profligate life and advantages of honor and salvation that come to obedient children and to wise and God-fearing men." They also had them devote some of their time to spiritual reading.

The daily routine of these youths was strict and regular. They had a specified time for each of their exercises. The length of their stay at Saint-Lazare was determined by their conduct. They were ordinarily kept until one detected sure signs that they were "disposed to live better and to behave more wisely for the future." Before their departure they made a spiritual retreat in preparation for a general Confession and for the worthy reception of Holy Communion.

St. Vincent ever had the welfare of the delinquents very much at heart. He frequently recommended them, as also the priests and brothers who cared for them, to the prayers of the community that God might give to the former the grace of a sincere conversion and to the latter the encouragement and the ability to discharge their duties faithfully. He took Christ for his model here as in all his other works. As Christ, he argued, had compassion on the demoniacs, the tempted, and the possessed, why should the brethren not "strive to imitate Him in a thing which He has testified to be so pleasing to Him?"

Vincent's prime purpose in keeping the wayward boys

[25] *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 188-9, No. 61, *Répétition d'Oraison du 16 Mars 1656.*

at Saint-Lazare was to effect in them a radical change of life, and toward its attainment he had the brethren in charge devote all their efforts. A secondary purpose was to relieve the boy's family of trouble and worry. This is evident from his own statement. One of the priests told St. Vincent of a boy who, even after a long confinement, gave no hopes of betterment; he had made use of threats and was capable "of some evil attempt sooner or later." He suggested, therefore, that the boy be sent back to his parents. Vincent promptly answered: "Are you aware of the fact, sir, that the principal purpose we ought to have in receiving these boarders here, is charity? But tell me, is it not a great charity for us to retain this man since, if he were outside, he would renew the trouble which he has formerly caused to all his relatives, who have had him confined here with the permission of the court, because being a bad boy they could not manage him? They have brought him here in order to have rest in their family and to try if God by this means would deign to bring about his conversion. Hence, to desire to send him back to-day, being still in his first frame of mind, would be to wish to put trouble back into a family which is at present at peace through his absence." He then adds that the threats of the boy are not to be feared, since he should know that it is his parents, and not the Company, that keep him there.

St. Vincent's method of treating these delinquents, therefore, ran along three main lines: strict confinement, good bodily care, and kind moral persuasion. The method was looked upon with favor by the courts of the time as is evidenced in the first place, by the fact that the magistrates committed the unruly boys to Saint-Lazare. Moreover, one of the highest judges of a sovereign court, whose nephew had demanded money from him under threat of death, was informed by a magistrate of the existence and methods of the institution at Saint-Lazare. He then made the statement that Paris had need of four similar institutions.

The results were very satisfactory. Of those who had spent some time at Saint-Lazare many were thoroughly reformed upon their departure. Many who had given up their studies for a life of debauchery returned to their

classes, where "they did wonders." Others, who had stolen from the paternal house and had been committed to Saint-Lazare before having an opportunity to squander it, frankly acknowledged where they had hidden the stolen goods and made full reparation. Others, who had struck their parents, or had threatened, or attempted to take their lives, begged pardon of their parents and never after gave cause of complaint.

In later years these youths were found in every walk of life, leading honorable and virtuous lives. Some entered austere religious orders where they led a life of penance. Others joined well-regulated religious communities where they devoted themselves to the service of God and of fellow man. Others became secular priests and fulfilled their charges faithfully. Others entered business or public life. Some even were found worthy and capable of being elevated to the highest offices of the judicature and other offices of great responsibility, which they exercised with efficiency and honor.[26]

3. *The Magdalens*

Sexual immorality was widespread in France at this period. The civil and foreign wars with the resulting social unrest and religious ignorance and indifference were undoubtedly contributing factors of no small importance. In 1560 an ordinance was issued at Paris prohibiting brothels. Later all prostitutes were required to leave the city within twenty-four hours. In 1635 an edict was issued condemning the men who engaged in the traffic to the galleys for life and the women and girls to be whipped, shaven, and banished for life without formal trial.

The Catholic reform movement, inaugurated at the beginning of the seventeenth century, included an earnest endeavor to abolish or, at least to mitigate, this vice with its evil effects. The Order of Penance of St. Magdalen, which had convents in Germany as early as the beginning of the thirteenth century for the admission and conversion of fallen women, opened a house at Paris in 1618. In the second decade of the century, Marie-Elizabeth, widow of M.

[26] Abelly, ii., 392-402.

Dubois, opened a refuge for a few fallen girls at Nancy and, with the assistance of her three daughters, cared for their temporal and spiritual needs. Encouraged by the Bishop of Toul, she founded a congregation to stabilize the work in 1631. The congregation was approved by Urban VIII three years later. In the same year Marie-Elizabeth with her daughters and seven companions took the three usual religious vows, to which was added a fourth; namely, to consecrate themselves to the service of fallen women. The congregation soon spread throughout France and was very successful.

Another congregation of this character owes its origin to Father Eudes. In 1640 Magdalena Lamy, an ordinary working woman, proposed to him the urgent need of an institution for the conversion of fallen women in Caen. Father Eudes immediately procured a house for the purpose and put a number of secular women in charge. Because of internal dissension all, with one sole exception, left the house at one time, leaving only the penitents behind. In this crisis the Bishop of Bayeaux, at the request of Father Eudes, sent a tried religious of the Visitation, Frances Margaret Patin, with two companions to take charge. Thus were formed the beginnings of the Sisters of Refuge in 1644. The special purpose of the new organization was the education of youth and the conversion of fallen women. The penitents were divided into three classes: a. girls under fifteen years of age who had contracted immoral habits, or who showed immoral proclivities; b. girls over 15 years of age who sought admission voluntarily; c. those who were admitted at the request of parents or the municipal authorities, and who were usually already morally corrupt. Each class was strictly segregated from the others.[27]

St. Vincent, too, was keenly interested in this type of work. He was directly connected with two institutions laboring to regain these unfortunates from their sinful lives. He also did much to protect innocent girls from the snares of the world and the malice of men.

[27] *Cf., v.g.,* Heimbucher, i., 531-2, No. 3. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd took their origin from this Congregation in 1835.

A. *St. Vincent and la Madeleine*

As mentioned above, the Order of Penance of St. Magdalen founded a convent at Paris in 1618. The institution was a failure practically from the beginning because of lack of experience and administrative ability on the part of those in charge. St. Francis de Sales was asked to put his Sisters of the Visitation in control, but he considered the undertaking inopportune. After his death, the same proposition was made to St. Vincent. He was now spiritual director of these religious and they, on their part, were eminently fitted for the work by their special profession of charity and kindness. Hence, after mature consideration, St. Vincent was fully persuaded that the Sisters of the Visitation should be placed in charge. Accordingly in 1629, he destined four for the work.

There was much to be regulated and reformed in this institution. St. Vincent proceeded with his wonted circumspection. He held a number of consultations with doctors and other persons of singular prudence and piety concerning the most efficient means of meeting the situation. New constitutions were drafted in 1637. They received ecclesiastical approbation three years later. The institution prospered under its new direction, and independent branch houses were founded at Bordeaux and Rouen.

Under pain of excommunication only sinful girls could be admitted.[28] Those whose virtue was endangered, however, could also be admitted, but only at the request of their parents. The penitents were divided into three classes. The first class comprised those who had given proof of their conversion after a long probation and had been admitted to vows. The second class embraced those who remained in the institution voluntarily and led a regular life of prayer, meditation and appropriate work, but were without vows, either because they were considered as yet unworthy or for some weighty reason, v. g., because they were married. After they were reformed and confirmed in virtue, they

[28] This severe measure was resorted to, either in order to force the institution to resume its original purpose, from which the religious formerly in charge had shifted, or in order to assure the absolute exclusion of innocent girls from contact with the fallen.

were free either to leave the institution or to remain and enter the first class. This latter choice presupposed a strict novitiate of two years. To the third class belonged those who were retained at the institution against their will. They were placed under the immediate direction and guidance of the Sisters of the second class, who by word and example endeavored to reclaim them from their sinful lives and to instill into their hearts a love for virtue. They lived and took their meals apart from the other religious of the house and spent their time in acts of penance, prayer, and work. They were kept in closer or less strict confinement according to their behavior, though all the classes were strictly cloistered. Upon their conversion they could either leave or join the second class, and, in the course of time, pass to the first.

There were ordinarily between 100 and 120 penitents in the various classes. St. Vincent informs us that there were between 120 and 140 in 1655. Of these about thirty belonged to the first class. Experience, however, taught St. Vincent to disapprove the method of admitting some to vows. Those thus favored, he said, become conceited and disdain the second class. These latter, in turn, conceive such an aversion for the former that, at the least fault committed by them, they murmur and complain bitterly against them. And these are not yet sufficiently grounded in virtue to bear affronts meekly. The consequence is that there is division and continual wrangling in the house, "and if the Sisters of Sainte-Marie [the religious put in charge in 1629] did not direct them to do what they could to moderate all things," continues St. Vincent, "this house would long since have been turned topsy-turvy." St. Vincent, therefore, profiting by the experience thus gained, endeavored to limit the first class more and more with the ultimate intention of abolishing it entirely.[29]

The Mother Superioress, a religious of the Visitation, seems to have had supreme direction and even St. Vincent did not urge his position to influence her in her work. He tells us in one of his letters that he sought admission for an

[29] *Lett.*, iii., 136, No. 1110, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa, Feb. 19, 1655.

unfortunate girl, but, as he expresses it, "the mother refused me completely." He did not insist but tried to have her admitted elsewhere.[30]

An important factor in the success of the institution were the able and virtuous confessors whom St. Vincent always endeavored to procure for the spiritual life of the inmates. They contributed much to the maintenance of peace and good order and the observance of obedience. The Ladies of Charity of the Court contributed to its financial support.

B. *St. Vincent and the Daughters of Providence*

Mlle. Pollalion (Marie de Lumague), a devout widow, soon after the death of her husband, left the court, where she had been maid of honor to the Duchess of Orleans and governess of her children, to begin a life of charity under the direction of St. Vincent. She chose as her special field work among fallen and endangered girls. In 1630 she founded a religious community, the Daughters of Providence, at Fontenay-aux-Roses, whose special purpose was to receive and educate young girls desirous of escaping the dangers of the world. They soon moved to Charonne, near Paris, and in 1652 took up their permanent residence in the latter city.

Mlle. Pollalion was among the ladies of the nobility who formed the conference of charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, at Paris in June, 1634, and one of the purposes of the Ladies of Charity of the Court, organized in 1635, was, as their constitutions say, to render assistance to "the little girls of Mlle. Pollalion.[31]

With the assistance of St. Vincent and the support of the Ladies of Charity, Mlle. Pollalion founded the Seminary of the Daughters of Providence at Paris in 1643, for the protection and education of young girls whom personal beauty, poverty, or parental neglect exposed to moral peril. It was also the purpose of the institution to train the better qualified of its wards to become educators of other girls similarly pressed.

[30] *Lett.*, ii., 141, No. 630, To Mlle. le Gras (1649).

[31] *Lett.*, *i.*, 90, No. 82, To Mlle. le Gras, June, 1634; Coste, 98; *Lett. et Conférences (Suppl.)*, 475.

Though Mlle. Pollalion interested herself in fallen girls in the beginning of her charitable activities, she seems afterwards to have restricted herself, and also the scope of the seminary, to girls in danger. In a letter dated July 24, 1642, St. Vincent informs us that she "would not know how to take these poor women; she [will look after] those who are in danger of going astray, and not those who have already gone."[32]

C. *Special Protective Work*

At all times St. Vincent made use of the house of Mlle. le Gras as a place of safety or retreat where girls and women solicited to sin or in danger of falling were received. Here they were advised and encouraged and made a spiritual retreat, generally under the immediate direction of Mlle. le Gras, while waiting to find a place or position of security.

But it was especially during the devastation of the northern provinces and the turmoils of the Fronde that St. Vincent had ample opportunity of practicing this work of spiritual mercy. Some girls, reduced to poverty and starvation, were on the verge of selling their virtue to preserve their lives. Others were obliged to take refuge in caves to escape the insolence of the soldiers who overran the country. St. Vincent had his helpers, members of his Congregation of the Mission, in the provinces, who kept him informed by letter of the conditions there.

Where poverty was the main factor of the evil, he relieved the distress by having food and clothing sent thither. A letter written in 1651 to St. Vincent from these districts says: "An alms which you sent us during Holy Week has removed a number of girls from imminent danger of losing their honor."[33]

Another appeal for help addressed from the provinces in 1654 states that even the daughters of noblemen of the frontiers of Champagne were reduced to extremities. It was thought most expedient to remove them entirely from danger. Thirty of them had already been sent to the com-

[32] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 132, No. 3013, To M. Pierre Duchesne, Confrère, Supr. at Crécy.

[33] Abelly, ii., 520; Idem, iii., 419.

munity of the Daughters of Saint Martha at Rheims, where they were being "instructed in the fear of God and trained to busy themselves with some little work." They were clothed and fed with the alms forwarded from Paris. There were still many others in similar distress awaiting relief.

When the missionary who had been commissioned with the distribution of the alms in Lorraine informed St. Vincent of the great number of girls there, some of prominent families, who were without means of support and protection, Vincent and the Ladies of Charity resolved to have them brought to Paris. The missionary accordingly made this known in the cities through which he passed, with the result that "a very large number presented themselves." It was impossible to take them all. A selection was made of those in the greatest peril. Of these about 160 were taken to Paris at different times and lodged at the house of Mlle. le Gras. The families of the city were then informed and those in need of maids or servants applied here. In this manner the girls received safe and honorable employment. Wherever possible, they were placed in families who were known and virtuous.[34]

During the Fronde of 1652 large numbers of women and children fled before the approaching armies and sought protection in Paris. At the advice of St. Vincent, the Ladies of Charity took charge of eight or nine hundred of these. They divided the refugees into several bands and lodged each band in a separate house suited to the purpose. Here they received the necessary bodily assistance and at the same time were instructed in matters of religion and were urged to make general Confessions.[35]

We learn St. Vincent's attitude toward work among fallen women from a letter he wrote to Mother Mary Euphrosine Turpin, Feb. 23, 1637, in which he urged her to assume the superiorship of the institution of St. Magdalen. He calls it a "work very holy in itself since it consists in giving a helping hand to souls who are on the way of perdition"; it means "to fill the office of second redeemer in their behalf

[34] Idem, ii., 501, 507; Idem, iii., 419.
[35] Idem, i., 286; *Lett.*, ii., 438, 441.

and to lead them, as it were, by the hand into the glory which our Lord has gained for them by His precious Blood; a work so great before God that He has considered it worthy of His Son and alone capable of drawing Him to earth." To the possible objection that such work was not becoming for the Daughters of Sainte-Marie, of which community the Mother in question was a member, he answers that "the work for the salvation of souls is proper to the children of God," and that, since our Lord and the Blessed Virgin have shown favor to *la Madeleine,* "we cannot doubt that it is becoming for the Daughters of Sainte-Marie."[36]

[36] *Lett.,* i., 162-5, No. 160.

CHAPTER IV

The Relief of Poverty

All the activities of St. Vincent de Paul were, with a very few exceptions, directed in some sense toward the relief of poverty. In the cases thus far considered the distress of poverty was aggravated by other factors, such as sickness, insanity and youth. The present chapter will be devoted to the consideration of Vincent's efforts to relieve distress in cases where poverty was the main, when not the sole, factor.

1. *Men's Confraternities*

Apart from the men organized under the leadership of M. de Renti, whom we shall consider in the following paragraph, St. Vincent de Paul organized charitable confraternities of men only as counterparts of the women's organizations of the towns and villages. [See pp. 165-9.] The women devoted themselves exclusively to the care of the sick poor, the men to the relief of the healthy poor. The two branches were, in reality, independent organizations under the direction of a common rector. Their points of contact were three. The officers of the men together with the rector admitted the sick to the care of the confraternity; the men were obliged to "place in the hands of the treasurer of the women the fourth part of their annual revenue and more, if necessary, in case the collections made by the women" did not suffice, which could "be ascertained by the rector as superior of both associations"; and finally, the officers of the men were to keep in touch with the state of affairs in the women's branch, by attending the meetings of the latter when the accounts were rendered.[1]

[1] This paragraph is based on a study of the following constitutions: *Règlement de la confrérie de charité d'hommes*, Folleville, Oct. 23, 1620; *Règl. de la conf. de la char. d'hommes et de femmes*, Courboing, June 19, 1622; *Règl. pour une conf. de char. d'hommes et de femmes et pour l'organisation d'une manufacture*, found in *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, pp. 412-33; and a constitution for the Union of a Conference of Charity and a Society of the Holy Name, found in *Lett.*, i., 19 sqq.

The constitutions establish two years as the duration of the different offices. The officers are the rector, the president, vice president and visitor. One constitution demands that the three officers be not elected by the members in general, but that the confraternity choose twelve of its members who, in turn, elect the three officers from their midst. The nine remaining members are to act as assistants to the three officers and the rector, who form the board of directors. Elsewhere we find the officers of the men's confraternity elected in the ordinary manner with no mention made of the nine assistants. One constitution, however, provides for two extra assistants, or consultors. No mention is made of the bursar, or procurator, common to the women's organizations.

The president and the rector equally hold the supreme power in the confraternity. Both preside at the meetings, conjointly enforce the rules of the association and execute the resolutions taken at the meetings.

The treasurer holds one of the keys of the money safe, the president the other. One constitution demands even three keys, to be held by different officers. The treasurer cannot open the safe but in the presence of the rector and the president, or at least one of them. He is allowed to have in hand only as much money as is necessary for one month. He employs the money according to the orders of the directors and renders an annual account in the presence of the directors, the nine assistants or the members, and certain officials of the city. It is also the duty of the treasurer to copy the resolutions taken at the meetings into a special book.

It is the duty of the visitor to seek out the bashful poor, the widows, the orphans, the civil and criminal prisoners, and all other persons in distress, in order to visit and console them and to make a report of their case at the following meeting. He then gives the relief as ordered by the directors. In urgent cases, however, he refers the matter either to the rector or to the president and follows their instructions. The visitor is also commissioned to sell the lambs and the wool sheared from the sheep that are kept by the members of the association (cf. Revenues, p. 129), and to deposit the money thus obtained with the treasurer. It is his further duty to see that the poor who are assisted by the confraternity attend

the catechetical instructions given by the rector and that they approach the sacraments at stated intervals. (Cf. The Supernatural in Social Service, p. 93.) One of the constitutions makes him at the same time the sacristan of the confraternity with the commission to have the chapel in readiness for services on the day of the monthly meeting and on solemn feast days.

Only the directors attend the meetings at which the affairs of the confraternity are discussed. The constitution of Folleville, which provides for nine assistants, makes the further provision that, when the vote of the officers is equally divided, the assistants, or those of them who are near at hand up to the number of five, be called in to decide the vote.

In one of the constitutions we also find provision made for an "associated servant." He is elected from among the members by the four directors for a term of two years. It is his office to summon the directors and the members to the meetings at the bidding of the rector or the president. He is also to perform any other little duty the confraternity may ask of him. If he devote more than two hours of labor to the business of the confraternity, he is to receive a reasonable pay, if he be poor and desires it.

There is no distinction made as to membership, except that the applicants be honest and virtuous, and, to avoid confusion, that the number be limited.

The officers, together with the nine assistants only, or, as the other constitutions prescribe, with all the members, renew their purpose annually in the presence of the rector to observe the constitution of the association and to do all in their power to assure its conservation and to promote its activities.

The children that fall to the care of the confraternity are to be placed in a trade at a competent age, the impotent poor are to receive full support from the confraternity, while those who can gain a part of their livelihood can expect only the other part from the confraternity. (Cf. The Needy, p. 119; Relief, pp. 155-61; Industrial Training, pp. 230-4.)

If we compare the men's branch of these confraternities with that of the women, we find that the latter were far more successful. We need but quote the words of St. Vincent

himself on this point. He writes: "The men and the women together do not agree in the matter of administration; the former wish to arrogate it entirely to themselves[2] and the latter cannot tolerate it. The conferences of Joigny and Montmirail were governed in the beginning by both sexes . . .; but because of the common purse it was found necessary to remove the men."[3] In another letter of a much earlier date, he makes the emphatic statement: "Experience teaches us it is absolutely necessary that the women do not depend on the men in this matter, especially as regards the purse."[4]

2. *M. de Renti*[5]

Among the many who were forced to flee from Lorraine and take refuge in Paris during the Thirty Years' War were a number of socially prominent and noble individuals of both sexes and even entire families. They were enabled to eke out a meagre existence for a time with the money obtained from the sale of the little belongings they were able to rescue from the debris of their devastated property. When this source of revenue was exhausted they fell into extreme misery, for they were unaccustomed to earn a livelihood and were more ashamed to beg it.

In the spring months of 1640, the situation was called to the attention of St. Vincent. With his characteristic sympathy, he exclaimed: "Yes, it is befitting to assist and relieve these poor noblemen in honor of our Lord who was very noble and at the same time very poor." But he did not wish to impose new burdens on the organizations already working to their full capacity. Accordingly, after some thought, he deemed it a worthy object of the charity of prominent men,

[2] St. Vincent gives other proofs of being wary of this tendency on the part of the men. He does not wish, for example, that an ecclesiastic be given the direction of la Madeleine for fear that he assume greater authority "than is expedient," which his successors then will perhaps claim as a right. *Lett.*, ii., 142, No. 631, To the Superioress of la Madeleine (1649).

[3] *Ibid.*, 270, No. 735, To M. Blatiron at Genoa, Sept. 2, 1650.

[4] *Lett.*, i., 153, No. 151, To Mlle. le Gras, Oct. 31, 1636.

[5] Gaston de Renti, born at Bény, in the diocese of Bayeux, in 1611, was one of the most worthy and active co-operators of St. Vincent. In his castle at Bény he served and instructed the poor in person. When at Paris he visited the Hôtel-Dieu daily and went every night to give religious instructions to the travelers at Saint-Gervais. He died at the age of thirty-eight.

and determined to organize a number of such for the purpose. He called together seven or eight lords and other men of distinction residing at Paris and spoke so efficaciously of the importance and merit of this good work that they resolved to undertake it with M. de Renti at their head.

Some of them were immediately commissioned to visit the poor nobles in their rooms in order to ascertain more in detail their actual needs, to register their names and to learn the number of persons in each family. A report was made at the following meeting, the matter discussed, and an assessment made on all present whereby sufficient means were obtained to furnish relief for a month.

Thereafter they met on the first Sunday of every month at Saint-Lazare. The organization had no standing treasury. The members took turns visiting the families. They showed them every respect, consoled them, assisted them otherwise in their affairs wherever they could, and, at the same time, ascertained the particular needs of each. At each monthly meeting a collection was taken up by assessment in proportion to these needs.

One of the lords of this organization testified that "M. Vincent was always the first to give; he opened his heart and his purse, so that when anything failed he contributed all he had and deprived himself of things necessary for himself in order to complete the work begun. Once even, when 300 livres were still required to make up a considerable sum, he gave them immediately; and it was known that this was the money given him by a charitable person that he might have for himself another horse better than his own, which had fallen under him several times from weakness, for it was very old. But he preferred to take the risk of being injured than to neglect to assist persons whom he believed to be in need."[6]

This work continued for seven or eight years. When comparative peace had been restored to Lorraine many of the families returned to their homes. St. Vincent provided them not only with the necessaries of the journey, but

[6] *Cf.* Abelly, i., 247-50; Idem, ii., 503; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 484-5; *Lett.*, i., 323, No. 296, To M. Lambert, Confrère at Richelieu, July 22, 1640; *Ibid.*, 334, No. 299, To M. Codoing, Confrère at Annecy, July 26, 1640.

also with sufficient means to sustain them for some time after their return. Those who remained at Paris continued to receive assistance throughout.

At the same time there were in Paris a number of English, Scotch and Irish nobles who had been obliged to leave their respective countries on account of their religion. The same organization that assisted the nobles of Lorraine assisted also these. The work was carried on until St. Vincent's death—a period of about twenty years.

3. *The Ladies of Charity*

In the course of this treatise mention has several times been made of the Ladies of Charity. They occupied themselves with a great variety of charitable works, but their most extensive was the relief of the devastated provinces. Hence we shall discuss their organization here as a *Poverty Relief* association.

The first confraternity of the Ladies of Charity was organized in 1629 to serve the poor sick of the Parish of Saint-Sauveur (Cf. Visiting Nursing, pp. 169-71). In 1634 a second confraternity was organized to visit the poor sick of the Hôtel-Dieu (see pp. 172-9). This latter soon expanded in scope and membership so as to include within its ranks more than two hundred of the highest nobility of France, and among them the queen mother, who rendered personal service or financial support to "all the good works instituted by the women in this century,"[7] though the visiting of the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu and the care of the foundlings ever remained their prime charges.

Of these confraternities St. Vincent writes in 1656: "There are two associations of ladies at Paris who have obliged themselves to assist the poor. The one comprises those of the parishes who take care of the sick and who have some kind of rule. . . . The other . . . has no written rule and the charity of the members is not restricted, but extends much further in different places and in several manners according to the public needs."[8] And, in fact, although the confraternity of which the Ladies of the Hôtel-

[7] *Projet de Règlement,* Coste, 98.
[8] *Lett.,* iii., 322, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656.

Dieu formed the nucleus, had functioned on a thoroughly organized basis from the beginning, it was not until 1660, or twenty-six years after its foundation, that it was given a definite written constitution. We find, it is true, a constitution for the Ladies of Court dated 1635.[9] But, in the light of St. Vincent's statement quoted above, we prefer to discredit this date and follow Coste (p. 97, n. 2), who considers it an incomplete constitution drafted between 1658 and 1660.

According to this constitution,[10] the Ladies of Charity of the Court formed an independent confraternity whose main purpose was to study the needs of the various works in which the other Ladies of Charity were engaged and to assist them financially. The membership is restricted to "the sacred person of the queen and a small fixed and limited number of ladies whom it shall please her to choose for this purpose." Nothing is determined concerning the officers further than that "the queen shall have the perpetual direction of the said company."

The members shall be divided into committees of three, each of which shall be assigned for a year to a separate work of the Ladies of Charity. The works enumerated in the constitution are the Hôtel-Dieu, the foundlings, the prisoners, the little girls of Mlle. Pollalion, the orphans of Mlle. de Lestang, the Daughters of Charity of the parishes, the girls of *la Madeleine,* "and all the good works instituted by the women in this century." After the lapse of the year, the various committees shall be given different fields of labor.

Meetings shall be held on the first Friday of each month. During the first half hour, "they shall converse humbly and devoutly . . . on the things which our Lord shall have given them at prayer on the morning of the day of the meeting." The Ladies shall then report in order the difficulties and the needs which they have found in their respective fields of labor. After discussing the questions the queen "shall collect the opinions of each of them and recommend what she shall find best before God." Her recommendations shall be registered in a book and executed by the Ladies of the respective departments.

[9] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 475-6.
[10] Coste, 97-100; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 475-6.

The details of the various problems shall not be brought before this general assembly; but the members of each committee shall hold a previous meeting in which they shall discuss the special difficulties and needs of their department. Only the results of their discussions shall be proposed to the general meeting.

All irrelevant matters, and especially affairs of the state, are to be excluded from the meetings and the members are forbidden to take occasion at the meetings to promote their own interests.

The members shall spend at least a half hour in meditation daily and also hear Mass, read a chapter of a spiritual book and make an examination of conscience every day, and receive the sacraments at least every week. They are admonished to practice charity among themselves, visiting and consoling one another when sick, and communicating for the intention of the sick members and for the repose of the souls of the deceased. Finally, they are told to honor "the silence of our Lord in all things that regard the said company, for the Prince of the world rejoices at holy things that are divulged in the world."

The constitution of 1660[11] regulates the activities of the other Ladies of Charity. It is of special interest since it was drafted by St. Vincent in his last days, and hence embodies the experience of his long charitable career.

It prescribes nothing new as to membership. Widows, married women, and young ladies shall be admitted as in the ordinary confraternities. The officers, too, shall be three in number, as usual, viz., the superior and her two assistants, who, "together with a priest of the Mission shall have the full administration of the company." The officers, however, shall be chosen from among the widows and young ladies; the married women are expressly excluded. This restriction is undoubtedly made in order that the officers be not hampered with household duties. The term of office shall be of three years' duration. The three officers, however, shall not be replaced simultaneously, but the elections shall be so arranged that one of the officers, beginning with

[11] Coste, 100-6.

the second assistant, shall be replaced, when not reëlected, annually.

Eight or ten days before the election of an officer, the officers and the priest shall, in a special meeting, select two candidates. These shall then be proposed at the general meeting and one of them elected by majority vote. A further purpose of this preliminary meeting of the officers shall be to examine the financial accounts and see that they are in readiness to be presented to the general meeting.

The superior shall see to it that the constitution is observed, and that each member performs her duty well, admonishing those who fail. She shall admit to the confraternity the applicants who are known to be virtuous and both willing and able to undertake the exercises of charity and to submit to the regulation of the company. She shall notify the company of a sick member that the others may pray for her and visit her. She herself shall visit those who desire it. If a member dies, she shall inform the others that each may receive Holy Communion and have a Mass said for the repose of her soul. She is also empowered to assemble the members when she deems it expedient. "In short, she shall animate the body of the company and govern it with the advice of the said priest of the Mission and of her two assistants."

The first assistant shall act as counsellor to the superior and represent her in her absence. She shall receive and keep the money destined for the collation of the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu [see pp. 177-8], and for the other charities of the company, except that for the foundlings. She shall render an annual account, but only to the company.

The second assistant likewise shall act as counsellor to the superior and assume her office if both she and the first assistant are absent. She shall keep an account of the money destined for the foundlings, and shall also render an annual account to the members of the company only.

There shall always be Daughters of Charity, affiliated with the work of the Ladies, to have care of the nourishment and education of the foundlings and to assist them in their activities at the Hôtel-Dieu.

The constitution provided also for funds. The members,

it states, shall contribute monthly according to their devotion and, at the same time, endeavor to have others contribute, "whether it be money, or linen, or bedsteads, clothes and sweetmeats, or other things which can serve both for the poor of the Hôtel-Dieu and for the foundlings and for the other works of charity of which the company shall have charge."

The constitution prescribes a weekly meeting[12] to be held at the home of the superior or at some other designated place. "The first to arrive shall occupy themselves humbly with some thing of edification while awaiting the others." They shall report in order to the assembly what they have done, the difficulties they have encountered, and the successes they have met with, each concerning the particular work in which she has been employed. They shall also propose the new needs discovered. These shall then be discussed by all present, after which a vote shall be taken. The result shall be recorded in a register and executed by those who shall be designated therefor.

The constitution then gives the practical advice to the members never to interrupt the speaker at the meetings, to express their thoughts on any given topic briefly, and always to act out of "pure love of God regarding only the greatest good to be done and not the places and the persons recommended."

The members of this confraternity have the same spiritual exercises as the Ladies of the Court except that they are required to approach the sacraments at least once a year instead of weekly. But they are asked to receive Holy Communion on the Saturday of Ember Days "in order that it may please God to give good priests to His Church and new blessings to the Company." A prudent silence regarding the affairs of the confraternity is also imposed upon them as upon the Ladies of the Court.

The concluding provision is peculiar to this constitution. "And in order that it may please God to perpetuate

[12] This is the only constitution that demands regular meetings more frequently than once a month. This peculiarity owes its origin to the fact that weekly meetings came into vogue during the relief of the provinces and were then continued.

the company," it reads, "the Ladies shall during their lives dispose one of their relatives, or another who possesses the requisite qualities, to succeed them in the practice of these works of mercy, and, after the officers shall have accepted her, they shall present her to the ordinary assembly."[13]

This division of the Ladies of Charity became the nursery from which a number of Ladies went forth to engage in, and develop, special fields of charity. Thus, for example, Mme. de Lamoignon organized the society for the prisoners, Mlle. Pollalion devoted her activities to the reclamation and preservation of young girls, and Mlle. de Lestang founded an orphanage.[14]

Six Ladies attended the preliminary meeting at which this confraternity was launched in 1634.[15] But within a very short time St. Vincent could say that there were between a hundred and a hundred and twenty comprised within its ranks.[16] The number for a time exceeded even two hundred. But many of these had joined the enterprise more as a novelty and a matter of fashion than out of a sense of the obligations of Christian charity. They deserted the ranks with the abatement of their first enthusiasm and especially when faced with the great sacrifices demanded of them during the relief of the provinces. Moreover, many of them were called away by death and none were found to replace them. By 1656, the membership had dwindled to forty or fifty.[17]

[13] We find first mention of this manner of soliciting new members in the conference of St. Vincent at the general meeting of the Ladies of Charity of July 11, 1657. We read there: "It has for this purpose been proposed before, that the Ladies some time before their death, should dispose a daughter, a sister, or a friend to enter the company." *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 216.

[14] For details concerning the activities of the Ladies in the various fields of charity, *cf.* Visiting Nursing, pp. 169-79; Prison Work, pp. 237-8; The Magdalens, pp. 251-3; The Relief Work of the Provinces, pp. 278 sqq.; Foundlings, pp. 199-218.

[15] *Lett.*, i., 90, No. 82, To Mlle. le Gras, June, 1634.

[16] *Ibid.*, 87, No. 76, To M. Du Coudray at Rome, July 25, 1634.

[17] Coste, 51-2, 161; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 205; *Lett.*, iii., 322, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656. Abelly, in quoting the conference of July 11, 1657, which was given by St. Vincent at a general assembly of the Ladies, states that the membership at that date was a hundred and fifty (Abelly, ii., 470; *Lett. et Confér.* [*Suppl.*], 205; Coste, 162). This would imply an increase of a hundred within a year, which is very improbable at this period.

The conferences of St. Vincent to these Ladies amply evidence the efforts he had to make and the motives he had to propose, in order to induce them to remain at their post. The five conferences which have come down to us from the period between 1638 and 1647, all treat professedly of persevering in the works undertaken.[18] He insists therein on the words of Christ that only those who persevere to the end shall be saved (Matt. 24, 13), and that no one putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of heaven (Luke 9, 62). He recalls the words of Christ, "Depart, ye cursed" (Matt. 25, 41), and their counterpart, "Come, ye blessed" (Matt. 25, 34), which will be determined respectively by the omission or exercise of charity. He extols charity which is the fulfillment of the law, and lauds the excellence of the work of the Ladies of which God alone can be the author. He appeals to their sense of shame by reminding them that, if they discontinue, they will hear the mocking words: "This man began to build and was not able to finish" (Luke 14, 30). He proposes to them the happiness promised in the beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. 5, 7). He recalls the words of Holy Writ that "he who will have mercy on the poor, will never be in need" (Prov. 28, 27), and assures them that those who practice charity may look forward to a happy death.

After the death of St. Vincent the Ladies continued their labors along the lines traced out by their founder until disorganized during the French Revolution. They were reëstablished, however, in 1839 or 1840, at the instigation of the Viscountess de le Vavasseur, with the approbation of the Archbishop of Paris and through the efforts of M. Jean-Baptiste Etienne, the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission.[19]

4. *Home for the Aged Poor*

A rich burgess of Paris, desiring to render special service to God and having implicit confidence in the charity and

[18] Coste, Conferences No. 7-11, pp. 137-150; and *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, pp. 230, 223.

[19] *Cf.* Coste, 50; Goyau, 71-2.

judgment of St. Vincent, presented him with a considerable sum of money in 1653 that he might use it for some charitable purpose according to his discretion. The only condition attached was that the name of the benefactor be never made public.

After serious consideration and consultation with the donor, St. Vincent resolved to employ the money in founding a retreat for poor artisans, who, on account of old age or sickness, could no longer gain a livelihood and were, in consequence, reduced to beggary. This condition meant practically that they were exposed to dangers both bodily and spiritually. And it was this double need that St. Vincent, in perfect accord with the desires of the benefactor, purposed to meet through the new institution. The benefactor, in fact, as quoted in a conference of St. Vincent to the inmates, had especially the spiritual welfare of the poor in mind. The quotation reads: " 'Sir, I do not regard the body, but I regard the soul; it is not only to assure them against their misery that I give my goods for their maintenance, but my purpose is that they be instructed and that one teach them the things that are necessary for their salvation.' "[20]

The benefactor desired further that the entire spiritual and temporal administration be committed in perpetuity to the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission. The institution was called the Hospice of the Name of Jesus. St. Vincent had the document of foundation drawn up before a notary public. The Archbishop of Paris approved the establishment with its purpose and organization, and the king confirmed and authorized it by his letters patent.

To execute his design, Vincent bought some property and two houses in the suburb of St. Lawrence, and had a little chapel built. After furnishing the houses with beds and the other necessary things, he opened the doors to receive forty poor, twenty men and a like number of women. He insisted on the strict separation of the sexes. They were lodged in separate buildings, and the chapel and dining room

[20] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 236, No. 73. *Catéchisme aux Pauvres Ouvriers de la Famille de Jésus.*

were so arranged that the two classes could assist at the same Mass and hear the same reading at table without being able to see or speak with each other.

The Daughters of Charity were charged with the care and service of these poor, while a priest of the Mission attended to their spiritual needs. St. Vincent himself was one of the first to instruct them and to recommend mutual peace, piety and especially gratitude to God for having removed them from their indigence and for having procured for them a retreat where all their needs of body and soul were being cared for. That they were in dire need of religious instruction is seen from the conference to which reference was made above, and which is the only one of its kind that has been preserved. In it St. Vincent teaches the inmates how to make the sign of the cross and instructs them in the most elementary mysteries of the Catholic faith.

The poor were not to remain idle, but were expected to earn a part of their livelihood, if at all possible, by busying themselves according to their strength and their trades. For this purpose, St. Vincent supplied them with the necessary tools, looms, and the like.

The number of inmates was restricted to forty. When one died, another was immediately received to fill the vacancy. There was always a long waiting list of those who were attracted by the peaceful and regulated life. Many of them applied for admission several years in advance.[21]

The institution was very successful. Abelly informs us that the Ladies of Charity of Paris and other persons of prominence and virtue who visited it marveled at the good order and harmony that reigned there, and at the thrift with which it was conducted. "One sees there," the same author continues, "a marvelous peace and union; murmuring and slander were banished with the other vices. The poor occupied themselves with their little works and acquitted themselves of all the duties of piety conformable to their condition. Finally, it was the life of the first Christians on a small scale, and rather a religious community than a hospice of seculars."[22]

[21] *Cf. Lett.*, iii., 121, No. 1100, To M. le Pelletier (1655).
[22] Abelly, i., 307-11; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 506-8.

St. Vincent, in the conference already quoted, tells the inmates to thank God for having provided them "with the things necessary both for body and soul," and then continues: "What more can you desire? You are given your food, not indeed as the presidents, but all that is necessary. How many poor are there in Paris and elsewhere who have not the good fortune that you have; how many poor nobles who would consider themselves very happy if they had the food you have! [There are] so many poor laborers who work from morning till night who are not as well nourished as you."

We learn from one of St. Vincent's letters that a certain ecclesiastic was entrusted with money to make a foundation for the maintenance of six poor people; he thought of making it in favor of St. Vincent's institution. With this intention he had four poor there for some time, but later recalled them at the instigation of the donor to make the foundation elsewhere. There is no reason given for this course of action, but most probably it was because of the difficulty of obtaining admission into the Hospice of the Name of Jesus, and not on account of any complaints against the management.[23]

When Abelly wrote his biography of St. Vincent in 1664, four years after the Saint's death, the Home for the Aged Poor was hard pressed for funds, and it was feared that forty inmates could no longer be maintained. Still the institution continued in existence until the Revolution. It was then transformed into a hospital for incurables.

5. *L'Hôpital Général*

The armies of beggars had long constituted a vexing social problem for entire Europe. Numerous but ineffective attempts had long been made to suppress begging by legislation and by the establishment of asylums and houses of detention and correction.[24]

France, too, was making efforts to rid itself of beggars by similar methods. From the first years of the reign of Louis XIII there was a strong sentiment in favor of con-

[23] *Lett.*, iii., 121, No. 1100, To M. le Pelletier (1655).
[24] *Cf., e.g.*, Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part I., 232-245.

fining the poor in institutions. In 1611, statutes were drafted "for the hospices of the confined poor," and letters patent, issued by the king the following year, ordered the "idle beggars" to be placed in the *Maison de la Pitié* and the institutions dependent upon it. The project proved immature and unequal to the enormity of the task. It failed completely after five or six years. In 1622, the king issued new letters patent for an asylum intended for "those who flock" to Paris "and fall daily into poverty, both healthy and invalid, vagabonds of both sexes, be they young or old, not confined to bed by illness." Again the project proved unsuccessful. Ten years later the Parliament of Paris made an award for "the establishment of a general hospice where the poor of all conditions could be comfortably lodged." This was no more successful than the former attempts had been.

It was different, however, in other parts of France. A house, established at Lyons in 1531, for the care of the unfortunates whom the famine of the neighboring provinces had driven thither, became within a short time an asylum for all indigents. At Marseilles in 1641 a house was established "to confine the poor beggars, men, women and orphan children, and other needy persons not having the means of gaining a livelihood, and to train them in the fear of God and in the work" of which they were capable. Nine years later, Nantes transformed its hospital into a hospice for beggars. In the same year the parliament of Normandy ordered that all the poor wandering through the city, men and boys, women and girls, should be confined in various institutions, where alms would be distributed to them. Other cities, as Rouen, Beauvais, and Chartres, were introducing the same system.[25]

A new and successful impetus was given to this phase of social relief at Paris through St. Vincent's Hospice of the Name of Jesus. The Ladies of Charity, interested at all times in the undertakings of Vincent, came frequently to visit his new institution. They were struck with admiration at the wonderful order maintained there and at the spirit of piety and contentment that prevailed among its inmates.

[25] *Ibid.*, 247-251.

They conceived the plan of extending the benefits of such an institution to the 40,000 able-bodied beggars of the capital. What was being accomplished on a miniature scale could, under the master direction of St. Vincent, they were convinced, be extended indefinitely.

One of the Ladies immediately offered 50,000 livres to begin the work. Another pledged 3,000 livres rent for the same purpose. The idea spread fast. At the following weekly meeting, the Ladies proposed the project to St. Vincent. He was taken by surprise. He considered the idea more indicative of the zeal and charity of the good Ladies than capable of immediate execution. As was his wont when confronted with a new undertaking of consequence, he advised delay for prayer and consideration. But the Ladies would not be put off. At the next meeting they gave the assurance that money would not be wanting. They knew persons of wealth waiting to contribute considerable sums. They urged Vincent, therefore, to consent that the work be begun at once. He would fain have delayed longer, but he found it impossible to stem the tide of growing enthusiasm. The question was voted on and decided in the affirmative.

For the success of an undertaking of such immense proportions, the first requisite, as was evident to all, were buildings and grounds sufficiently spacious for the accommodation of thousands. After some consultation Vincent was deputed to request the king, through the mediation of the queen mother, for the grant of La Salpêtrière, a large tract of land including spacious edifices on the bank of the Seine. He obtained his request without difficulty. The opposition of a certain individual, who claimed an interest in the property, was silenced by the promise of a hundred livres of rent on the part of one of the Ladies.

The Ladies in their enthusiasm now thought everything in readiness for the immediate execution of their design. They were impatient to see all the poor of Paris taken thither. But two important points were as yet undecided, viz., the manner of getting the poor into the institution, and the method and personnel of administration.

St. Vincent's main concern for the nonce was, therefore, to moderate the ardor of the Ladies. Being fearful of the

success of the undertaking on so vast a scale, he wished first to make an experiment with only one or two hundred poor. Let these, he said, come of their own volition. If they are well treated and contented others will be attracted and thus the number will increase gradually and in proportion as God sends funds, whereas haste and constraint might very easily frustrate the designs of Providence.

A more formidable obstacle was placed in the way by the magistrates of the city. Their authorization was necessary for the undertaking, but some of the principal officials, in the light of experience, considered the idea chimerical and withheld their consent. Thus the years 1655 and 1656 passed without anything definite being accomplished. Finally, a working plan and a form of government was agreed upon.

In the meantime, the work took on a different phase. Inspired by the success of the institutional method as a weapon against mendicancy in other cities of France, especially Lyons, and emboldened by the public sentiment aroused, on the one hand, against begging and, on the other, in favor of St. Vincent's undertaking, the civil authorities deemed it opportune to renew the general edict forbidding mendicancy in Paris. Accordingly, the king issued an edict in April, 1656, in virtue of which all able-bodied beggars were obliged either to leave the city, to work, or to betake themselves to the General Poor House. Though the text of the edict expressly states that it was prompted by "the sole motive of charity," it was in reality a police measure and a renewal of the police ordinances which had proven ineffective in the past.

Administrators, all men of honor and piety, were appointed to begin the work. Another full year was spent in making necessary preparations. Without the consent or even the foreknowledge of St. Vincent, the king and the Parliament ordered that the Daughters of Charity be employed in the institution and that the priests of the Mission attend the spiritual needs of the inmates. After four months' consideration and hesitation, St. Vincent writes thus to M. de Mauroy, supervisor of finances: "I have communicated the affair of the Great Hospice [i. e., the question of accept-

ing the spiritual direction] to our little Company for the last time, and all are unanimously of the opinion that it cannot at all undertake it, and they have earnestly entreated me to beg you, sir (and through you the administrators), as I most humbly do, to excuse them for the inability to render you this act of obedience."[26]

The real reason of Vincent's refusal has ever been more or less a matter of conjecture. He himself, it is true, pleads a dearth of men and an overdemand on these comparatively few from other quarters. Abelly merely states it was done "for several very grave and very important reasons." But the biographers in the main are inclined to think it was due to the fact that Vincent could not reconcile himself to the idea that the poor should be sent to the General Hospice and retained there by compulsion, either because he had learned from the experience at Mâcon that the poor resented such methods [see pp. 322-3] or, according to Lallemand, because his Irish missionaries had given him an unfavorable report of the working of the English houses of correction.[27]

Still we must not imagine that St. Vincent was resentful or that he opposed the institution in any way. On the contrary, he himself wrote to Mme. d'Aiguillon, after communicating to her his refusal to accept the spiritual direction: "I very humbly entreat you . . . to assure them [the administrators of the institution] that this will not prevent us from going to visit and serve the poor under their good pleasure when we can do so."[28] And when he had definitely decided to refuse the appointment, fearing lest other ecclesiastics should be reluctant to take up the work as long as his Congregation was named in the letters patent of the king, he immediately renounced his claim juridically. And still fearful lest his refusal should retard the opening of the institution, he personally invited an ecclesiastic who fre-

[26] *Lett.*, iii., 436-7, No. 1359, Mar. 23, 1657. *Cf.* also *Avis et Conférences aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 205, *Répétition d'Oraison du 11 Novembre, 1656; Lett.*, iii., 407, No. 1333, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, Jan. 23, 1657; *Lett.*, iv., 276-7, No. 1793, To Mme. La Duchesse d'Aiguillon.

[27] *Cf. Lett.*, iv., 276, No. 1793, To Mme. d'Aiguillon; Abelly, i., 316; Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part I., 254.

[28] *Lett.*, iv., 276-7, No. 1793.

quented the Tuesday Conferences at Saint-Lazare to accept the position.

But St. Vincent gave the greatest proof of his good will toward the institution after it had taken on a strictly political aspect, when he, in concert with the Ladies of Charity, placed at the full disposal of the magistrates, not only the property he had but recently obtained by a special grant of the king, but also the castle of Bicêtre, which he had obtained some years previously to house the foundlings. Moreover, the Ladies of Charity contributed large sums of money and large quantities of linen, beds, and other furniture, some of which had been made by the carpenters of Saint-Lazare.

To La Salpêtrière and the Bicêtre the king affiliated a number of institutions already functioning in different parts of the city. And after a year's intensive preparation, during which time the poor were already being received in one of the affiliated institutions, the General Hospice was solemnly opened, in May, 1657. The event had previously been published in all the parish churches of Paris. Of the 40,000 beggars of Paris, the majority left the city and others began to earn their livelihood, leaving only four or five thousand, most of whom were weak or infirm, to become charges of the institution. Their numbers increased in the course of time until the ordinary annual number of inmates was twenty thousand.

Thus were means taken to rid Paris of beggars, not by providing for merely a few by way of trial, nor by allowing the beggars the privilege of choice, as St. Vincent had desired, but by an absolute declaration affecting all the beggars of the city. This undertaking has been appraised as the greatest work of the century. It was also far-reaching in its results. By declarations of 1662, 1673 and 1676 the king ordered the establishment of similar institutions in all the large cities of his realm.[29]

If we submit to a closer scrutiny the rôle St. Vincent played in this movement, we find in the first place, that the idea of suppressing mendicancy through institutions was not new. Nor was the General Hospice novel in so far as it

[29] *Cf.* Lallemand, *Opus cit.*, iv., part I., 261-4.

had its origin in private initiative, for the establishment of a similar nature at Lyons, for example, was thus begun and long maintained. The General Hospice at Paris, was, however, without precedent as regards the immensity of the problem demanding solution. But in this St. Vincent had no part. He had wished to make a trial with only one or two hundred poor. On the other hand, though St. Vincent only unwittingly gave the first inspiration of a General Hospice by his Home for the Aged Poor, still he is deserving of great credit, for it was faith in his tried ability that gave the Ladies of Charity the courage to think of undertaking so enormous a task. They had long been witness to his many successful undertakings; they were confident he was capable of bringing this undertaking, too, to a successful issue if they could but enlist his interest and coöperation. But his greatest positive contributions were La Salpêtrière and the Bicêtre, which he placed at the disposal of the magistrates, and that too at a time when their intervention meant the frustration of his own plans and methods of procedure.

6. *General Relief*

St. Vincent de Paul not only relieved individual phases of human misery, but the public calamities that visited France during this period offered him occasion to prove his ability also in organizing and directing charity toward the simultaneous relief of a great diversity of evils affecting at times entire provinces, at others only single cities.

A. *The Relief of Lorraine*

Richelieu, bent upon making France the first power of Europe at any cost, had contented himself for a number of years with lending moral support and financial aid to the Protestant princes of Germany against the Catholic rulers of Austria. He endeavored to compel Duke Charles IV of Lorraine with armed force to adopt a like policy, but the latter's sympathies were decidedly with the Catholic cause. In 1635 Richelieu declared war against Austria, thus inaugurating the French Period of the Thirty Years' War, and Lorraine became the scene of renewed conflict. War brought on the plague and the two together produced famine.

Thus Lorraine, which is described by contemporary writers as having been one of the most densely populated, most fertile and prosperous provinces of Europe, was within a few years reduced to abject poverty and misery.

A great number of the inhabitants had been carried away by death. The greater part of the nobles and the wealthier class of the citizens as well as many of the ecclesiastics fled from the country. Those who were compelled to remain were reduced to such distress that they were able to sustain life only by feeding on roots, reptiles, and putrid carrion. A letter written to St. Vincent in 1640 by an eyewitness, a priest of the Mission, states that at Saint-Mihiel "no horse dies of whatever disease but it is dragged away immediately to be eaten. Only three or four days ago," it continues, "there was a woman at the public distribution of alms who had her apron filled with this infected meat; she was giving it to the other poor in exchange for little morsels of bread."[30]

Famine had so stifled maternal instincts that mothers ate their infant children. Moreover, the inhabitants, especially the women and children, were in almost constant danger of being devoured by wolves so famished for want of food that they infested the roads and even entered towns and dwellings.

Girls and young ladies in great numbers were on the verge of selling their virtue to escape death by hunger. And religious women were all but forced from their cloisters in quest of bread, at the peril of their honor.

The greatest indigence and misery were found even in the larger cities, which were the least directly affected by the wars. Thus at Toul the poor sick were found lying in the streets. The number of the poor was so great in and around Metz that as many as four or five thousand were to be seen at its gates. At Pont-à-Mousson, in the vicinity of which no crops had been raised for two years because of the devastating armies, the priests of the Mission found in 1640 "four or five hundred poor so disfigured that they had never seen persons more worthy of compassion;" "the majority were from the country, so weak and languid, that they died in the very act of eating."[31] Writing from Saint-Mihiel at about the

[30] Cited in Abelly, ii., 495.
[31] *Ibid.*, 492.

same time, a priest of the Mission informs St. Vincent that "there are here more than three hundred (poor) in great need and more than three hundred others in extreme misery; . . . there are over a hundred who resemble skeletons covered with skin . . . ". The same missionary in a later letter informs St. Vincent that "at the last distribution of bread, which we made, there were 1,132 poor besides the sick, of whom there is a large number and whom we assist with food and proper remedies." A priest sent by St. Vincent to inspect the relief work of the province in 1640 gives us a further insight into the deplorable conditions of Saint-Mihiel. He writes thus in his report: "Besides all the poor beggars . . ., the majority of the inhabitants of the city, and especially the nobility, endure such famine that it can neither be expressed nor imagined; and what is the most deplorable is the fact that they do not venture to ask for anything. There are some who make bold to do so, but others would rather die."[32]

The ecclesiastics, too, suffered as well as the people. A report written by a priest of the Mission in 1640 states that "a parish priest who is half a league from the city of Saint-Mihiel is compelled to draw the plow, being yoked with his parishioners in place of horses."[33] A canon of Verdun was forced to leave his church and till the land in order to earn a bare livelihood. But the great exertion with its scanty return had so weakened him that he was obliged to appeal to St. Vincent for assistance, or die.

Such, in a general picture, were the conditions Vincent de Paul was called upon to ameliorate. The work of relief, like most of Vincent's undertakings, was occasioned, humanly speaking, by a trifling circumstance. In 1637 or 1638[34] a charitable person presented him with a sum of money to be used for the purpose. He forwarded it immediately to the priests of the Mission who were stationed at Toul. These set to work at once to employ it in furnishing lodging, food,

[32] *Ibid.*, 493-5.

[33] *Ibid.*, 495-6.

[34] Abelly (vol. i., 244) says it was in 1639. This is undoubtedly incorrect, for the same author (vol. ii., p. 487) cites in full a testimonial, dated Dec., 1639, wherein its writer, Jean Midot, the vicar general of the diocese of Toul, testifies to the relief already given by the priests of the Mission "for about two years."

and medical care for the poor and sick. St. Vincent, on the one hand, heard of the good results and, on the other, learned from them the vastness of the misery. He soon sent, therefore, other priests and brothers to render like assistance to other cities of Lorraine in similar distress.

St. Vincent's methods and organization were simple, but equal to the emergency. Paris was the center of the activities, and Vincent its prime mover, mainstay, and director. He aroused the interest of the Ladies of Charity in the work and relied upon them to furnish or procure the funds and other necessary provisions. He consulted them at the meetings concerning the distribtution of the alms after reading the appeals of relief from the missionaries, and acted according to their recommendations. He also very frequently took orders from the queen, in order that nothing be done contrary to the wishes of the benefactors.

He employed as a medium of publicity the letters from the missionaries. He sent them to different places that their reading might serve the double purpose of arousing the rich to practical compassion, and of acquainting the benefactors with the use to which their donations were being put, as also with the results obtained. The immediate recipients of these letters were expected to circulate them among their friends and acquaintances. Thus was the good work made known among the people and interest in it fostered. [See p. 134.]

The alms were then sent to the different distressed districts according to the wishes of the Ladies of Charity and there judiciously employed in the various phases of the relief work by the members of the Congregation of the Mission, both priests and lay brothers, whom St. Vincent had sent thither for the purpose. Though the selection of the persons to be assisted was left to the judgment of these distributors, still Vincent vigorously insisted that the alms be used for that phase of relief specified by the benefactors. He wrote, for example, to M. Du Coudray at Toul, June 17, 1640: "As regards the two thousand livres which you have received . . . for the religious women, in the name of God, sir, do not divert any of it to any other use under any pretext of charity whatsoever."[35]

[35] *Lett.*, i., 316-7, No. 292.

The sick were variously provided for. Wherever the priests of the Mission had an establishment, they converted all the available space into a temporary hospital. For example, at Toul, in 1639, they were caring for forty or sixty poor sick "in their house, though it was small." At Nancy, too, "they took into their house a number of sick." Others they had taken to the hospitals, as at Toul, Nancy and Bar-le-Duc. Finally, others were "lodged in the suburbs," as at Toul, while, for example, at Nancy, "there were ordinarily thirty, forty, or fifty . . . sick besides those treated in the hospital lodged here and there in the city."[36]

The missionaries provided medical care for all the sick that fell to their charge, no matter where lodged. In some cases, they engaged the physicians and paid both for their services and for medicines, as at Nancy, or, if the sick were in the hospital, they gave a monthly allowance to the hospital to care for all their needs, as at Bar-le-Duc. "Linen and money" were also given to the hospital at Nancy to care for the sick lodged there.[37]

In other places the lay brothers of the Mission, and probably at times also the priests, acted as physicians. We know, for example, that those working among the poor at Nancy "had some secret remedies for a number of cures which one had taught them, which cost them little, and which did not fail to bring a very great relief to the poor."[38] And again, the missionary who had been sent by St. Vincent to inspect the work done in the distressed regions says of Bar-le-Duc in his report of 1640: "They [the missionaries] themselves here dress the wounds of the sick [afflicted] with the scurf; heretofore there were ordinarily twenty-five of them, and there still remain twelve. This disease is very common throughout all Lorraine. In all the other cities these sick are found in proportion, and they are—thank God!—everywhere tended very carefully and charitably, so that all recover from it through a very good remedy which our brothers have learned."[39]

[36] *Cf. Lett.*, i., 241, No. 232, To M. de Sergis at Toulouse, Feb. 3, 1639; Testimonial of Jean Midot, Abelly, ii., 487; Abelly, ii., 487, 490, 498.

[37] Abelly, ii., 490, 498.

[38] *Ibid.*, 491.

[39] *Ibid.*, 498.

The sick, moreover, shared in the alms that were distributed to all the poor. Those, for example, that were cared for in the houses of the missionaries were supplied with all necessary food and clothing, as at Toul and Nancy. Those in the hospitals were given "soup, meat, and bread," as at Bar-le-Duc and Toul. Like alms were given also to the sick who were cared for outside the hospitals, as at Verdun and Nancy. In each of these latter places from thirty to sixty sick received their daily portion of "bread, soup, and meat;" while "clothes and linen" were given to the sick at Pont-à-Mousson.

The healthy poor were provided for according to their special needs. But nearly all had to be supplied in the first place with the necessary food, At Verdun the missionaries gave bread to four, five, and, at times, six hundred poor daily between the years of 1639 and 1641. And besides these, poor from the country and passers-by came at all hours of the day to receive food. Four to five hundred received bread and soup daily at Nancy. Some of these also found a temporary home with the missionaries.

There were also at Nancy two classes of persons who were ashamed of their poverty—people of the middle class and people of the nobility, both lay and ecclesiastic. To the former, numbering about fifty, a certain amount of bread was given each week; to the latter, about thirty in number, "some money each month, according to the condition and the needs of each."[40]

Likewise at Pont-à-Mousson, between four and five hundred poor were given food daily in 1640, and special provision was made for the poor ashamed to beg.

Some of the inhabitants of the neighboring villages, and especially the children from ten to twelve years, were hindered from coming for alms by the fear of being devoured by wolves. A charitable priest offered to bring them relief and received money from the missionaries with which to buy the necessary food.

Other forms of relief were given as necessity demanded and in as far as the resources permitted. Particular atten-

[40] *Ibid.*, 490-1.

tion was paid to nursing mothers. At Nancy, for example, they were given "money, meal, bread and soup." The poor who were able to work were given "shoes and tools . . . in order to go to the woods to gain their livelihood." This is expressly mentioned to have been the case at Pont-à-Mousson. The missionaries, too, distributed "linen and clothes" to the poor. As they gave shirts they took the old ones in return to have them washed and mended that they might be later given to others, or be made into bandages for the sick and wounded. We are told in a letter from Bar-le-Duc, dated July, 1640, that clothes were distributed every week; while an earlier letter, written in February of the same year, states that "at each distribution of bread it was necessary to give clothes to twenty-five or thirty poor." Within a short time two hundred and sixty had been thus clothed.[41]

We have already mentioned that those who were able to do so, fled from Lorraine to seek a livelihood elsewhere. The missionaries in the various cities directed many of these to Bar-le-Duc as the last large city in Lorraine and the gateway to France. The missionaries stationed here supplied them at a great expense with money and provisions for their journey into France. A large proportion of them sought refuge in Paris. Here they were received by St. Vincent, who had them lodged in different places within the city and in the suburbs, and procured for them food and clothing. Those who were unable to work were supported on alms. The able-bodied were given positions either to serve or to work at their respective trades.[42]

When peace had been restored in Lorraine and many of the refugees were ready to return to their homes, St. Vincent had them furnished with all the necessaries for the journey, as also with sufficient to subsist for some time after arriving home. He continued in the meantime to support those who remained at Paris. The special provision that was made for the care of the refugees of the nobility has already been considered [pp. 258-60].

[41] *Ibid.*, 491-2, 497-8.

[42] Renaudot was engaged in Paris at this time in finding employment for just such as these. Still, as has already been stated [see p. 79, note 19], we find it nowhere mentioned that Renaudot and St. Vincent ever met.

Fourteen Benedictine nuns had come from Rambervilliers to Saint-Mihiel for the purpose of founding a house at the latter place. The distress of the region precluded all hope of being able to subsist there. A missionary, therefore, at the instance of St. Vincent and the Ladies of Charity, directed them to Paris, where they were cared for. We have already considered the protection that was given to girls whose virtue was imperiled in the devastated territory [see pp. 252-3].

Many other persons of every walk of life went from Lorraine to Paris on their own initiative to lay claims to the assistance of St. Vincent—a fact which goes to show that Vincent was considered the universal refuge of the devastated province. Pierre Fournier, rector of the Jesuit college at Nancy, wrote thus to Vincent in 1643: "Your charity is so great that all have recourse to it. Every one looks upon you here as the asylum of the afflicted poor; this is why many present themselves to me that I may refer them to you, that by this means they may experience the effects of your goodness."[43]

In 1643 the sick had greatly decreased in number and the poor, given a little respite from the marauding soldiers, had set to work to earn their own livelihood. St. Vincent, accordingly, had the distributions of "bread, soup, and meat" discontinued, recalling, at the same time, the greater part of the missionaries who had been engaged in the provinces. The relief work, however, was not yet finished. It still continued for five or six years. And in proportion as the relief could be diminished in intensity on account of the improving conditions of the people, it became locally more inclusive. It was extended now to almost all the other cities of Lorraine, Château-Salins, Dieuze, Marsal, Moyen-Vic, etc. By the order of the queen and the direction of St. Vincent, it was extended likewise, for the space of two years, to various cities of the province of Artois, as Arras, Bapaume, Hesdin, etc.

During this period assistance was given not only to a large number of poor, who were ashamed to beg, to ruined

[43] Abelly, ii., 503-4.

bourgeois and noble families, but also to all religious communities, both men and women. The quantity of alms was determined by the needs. For example, three or four hundred livres per quarter were given to some religious communities, and to others five or six hundred, "according to their number and their needs."

Besides money, St. Vincent had about fourteen thousand ells of different kinds of cloth sent to these cities with which to clothe the poor of all conditions, the laity and the religious. Each trip into the province meant the clothing of about a hundred poor, men and women, boys and girls, while the religious were so destitute that they had to be supplied with cloth for their habits and their veils, as also with shoes.[44]

Throughout the entire relief work St. Vincent insisted on his usual method of uniting the spiritual with the material when ministering to the needs of the poor. Though the missionaries were burdened with the distribution of the alms, they still found time and opportunity to instruct the poor and administer the sacraments to them. At Verdun, for example, we are told that they "separated the young from the old in order to be able to instruct them with greater fruit." At Nancy they gave instructions daily "by which they disposed them [the poor] to go to Confession and Communion almost every month." They had those who were cared for in the hospital of this city approach the sacraments before being dismissed. At Pont-à-Mousson, "they gave a kind of mission to all [who received relief] in order to dispose them to make a good general Confession." The letters from the distressed districts make mention, too, of the spiritual work that was being done among the poor of Saint-Mihiel and of Bar-le-Duc. The poor of Lorraine who had found refuge in Paris under the protection of St. Vincent were given a mission by priests of the Tuesday Conference during the Easter season of 1641 and again in the following year in the village church of La Chapelle, about half a league from Paris.[45]

[44] *Ibid.*, 504-6.

[45] Abelly, i., 247; Idem, ii., 489-90, 493, 496, 498.

It has been estimated that almost 1,600,000 livres were distributed as alms among the poor of Lorraine, which, united to the relief given in kind, would equal approximately 8,000,000 livres in actual value. This enormous sum was used for the relief of twenty-five cities with their suburbs, besides a large number of villages and hamlets, and extended over a period of about ten years. Hence the daily sum at the disposal of the individual missionaries was comparatively small. Still the missionary, sent by St. Vincent to inspect the work in 1640, expressed his wonderment that the priest at Saint-Mihiel "could give so much alms, both in general and individually, with the little money he received from Paris."[46]

The same encomium could, undoubtedly, have been made of the other workers in the field, for the evidence shows that relief was given discriminately. M. d'Horgny, one of the oldest and most prominent members of the Congregation of the Mission, was commissioned by St. Vincent in 1640 to visit in person all the missionaries employed in the distribution of alms, in order to ascertain how the alms were being used and at the same time to take special note of the cities most in need of assistance. When the priests of the Mission extended their relief activities to Pont-à-Mousson in 1640, they received from the four parish priests of the city a list of the most distressed sick and of the poor ashamed to beg. We have already seen that the distribution of foods was discontinued in 1643 as soon as the needs of the poor permitted, and that the assistance, which was continued, was given, for example, to the religious "according to their number and their needs." Abelly says expressly of this after-relief that "everywhere the missionary . . . went from parish to parish and from house to house, accompanied by the parish priests, or other ecclesiastics commissioned by them, to assist him in distributing these clothes and alms according to the needs of each,—the distribution being made

[46] Idem, ii., 496. St. Vincent was at times hard-pressed for alms. We read in one of his letters to M. le Breton at Rome, dated Feb. 26, 1640: "We continue to assist these poor [of Metz, Toul, Verdun, Nancy] with 500 livres per month in each of the said cities; but, indeed, Sir, I fear we cannot long continue; there are so many difficulties to obtain" the necessary money. *Lett.*, i., 294.

in their presence and with their advice so that he could not be deceived in the discernment of the most needy."[47] These incidental remarks of St. Vincent's first historian amply show that Vincent, while not employing a technical system of case investigation, which was mostly impossible under the circumstances, still insisted that relief be given only to the real needy and that methods sufficiently thorough to attain this purpose be employed.

As regards case records, we have no direct evidence but only a few indications that point to a kind of record keeping. One of the missionaries, writing from Saint-Mihiel in 1640, tells St. Vincent that 1,132 poor received alms at the last distribution of bread that had been made.[48] This number is evidently not merely a conjecture, but the result of a strict account. Another missionary, writing to St. Vincent in the same year from Bar-le-Duc, states that twenty-five or thirty poor were clothed at each distribution of bread and that "within a short time" he has "clothed altogether two hundred and sixty."[49] Finally, the missionary who distributed the alms in money to the different religious communities during the period of after-relief demanded a receipt from each house. The evidence, however, does not tell us why these receipts were taken, nor to what purpose they were put.

Before concluding this paragraph we might make mention of still another feature of St. Vincent's method of procedure in dealing with the situation. He knew, as was evident to all, that the war was immediately responsible for the distress of Lorraine. Hence the most efficacious means of relieving the poverty was to remove the cause. Casting aside, therefore, all human respect and placing at stake the favor he enjoyed at the royal court, he one day approached Cardinal Richelieu, the all-powerful prime minister of France, pictured to him the sad consequences of the war on the moral and material well-being of the people, and pleaded for a speedy peace. Richelieu took the remonstrance in good grace and promised to work for peace, but added that it did

[47] *Ibid.*, 506.
[48] *Ibid.*, 494.
[49] *Ibid.*, 497-8.

not depend on him alone but on many others within and without the realm. As a matter of fact, the war continued.

B. *The Relief of Picardy and Champagne*

The Peace of Westphalia terminated the Thirty Years' War in 1648. Spain, however, was not included in this peace, and her war with France continued without interruption until the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659. This war, united to the civil dissensions of the Fronde between 1648 and 1652, reduced all France to a deplorable state of misery. But the war against Spain, as the French Period of the Thirty Years' War had been, was waged especially in the northern provinces. Hence these had the most to suffer. St. Vincent devoted himself principally to the relief of the two provinces of Picardy and Champagne, while other religious congregations were performing similar services in other provinces.[50]

The letters written to St. Vincent from these provinces during the period of relief disclose a misery more intense and widespread than that of Lorraine had been a decade earlier.[51] The armies harvested and carried away the crops. The fields remained uncultivated and unsown. Some entire cantons in the neighborhood of Rheims and Rethel were practically deserted. Only "the sick, the orphans, and the poor widows with children" remained. Those who had escaped death had fled to seek a livelihood elsewhere. At Guise alone more than five hundred sick sought refuge 'in caves and caverns better fitted as lodgings for beasts than for men," where, as the reports from Rheims, Rethel, etc., relate, they lay "on the flat ground, without linen or clothes except some paltry tatters" with which they covered themselves. "Most of the inhabitants [of the diocese of Soissons] died in the woods while the enemy occupied their homes;" the survivors returned to their dwellings, but only to die. At Saint-Quentin hunger forced the poor refugees from the woods into the city. Among them were "nearly four hundred sick, and the city, being unable to assist them, made half of them pass on; they died one after the other along the highways;" while

[50] *Cf., e.g.*, Lallemand, *Hist. de la Char.*, iv., part II., 429-30.
[51] These letters are cited in Abelly, ii., 511 sqq.

those who remained in the city were so naked that they did "not dare to rise from their rotten straw" to go to the priests of the Mission for relief.

Many of the people from the country flocked to the cities in the hope of finding relief and protection, but only disappointment awaited them. Twelve hundred, for example, sought refuge in Saint-Quentin, but there were already seven or eight thousand poor in the city famishing with hunger. Everywhere there were found prominent families who were, on the one hand, ashamed to beg, and, on the other, as one letter expresses it, there was none from whom to beg even had they desired to do so, since the evil of war had introduced an equality of misery everywhere.

To what extremes the poor were reduced through lack of food is seen, for example, from a letter from Saint-Quentin. "The famine is such," it says, "that we see men eating ground, browsing grass, pulling off the bark of trees, rending the wretched tatters wherewith they are covered in order to swallow them. But, what we would not venture to mention if we had not seen it and which horrifies, they eat their arms and their hands and die in desperation."

Many of the convents of religious women, too, were in great need. The inmates, suffering from cold and hunger, were confronted with the alternative of dying in the cloister, or of leaving their convents to wander over the devastated regions in quest of food. Also a large number of girls were in constant danger of suffering moral shipwreck.

Another problem which the missionaries had to deal with was the burying of the dead. Those laboring in the districts of Guise, Laon and La Fère report that "there are many who die in the villages . . .; no one is found to give them burial after death." Letters from the diocese of Soissons inform us that the missionaries found "the living with the dead; little children beside their dead mothers." In the districts around Rheims and Rethel the bodies were left "without burial and exposed for the most part to serve as prey for wolves." Cases similar to the above were of usual occurrence. To what dimensions the problem grew in the wake of the armies is illustrated by an example preserved by Abelly. "After the battle which was fought in Champagne

near Saint-Etienne and Saint-Souplet in 1651," he says, "more than fifteen hundred of the enemy remained" on the battlefield to become the prey of dogs and wolves, decomposing in the meantime and contaminating the air.

The spiritual destitution of the poor people was in proportion to their material misery. Around Guise, Laon, and La Fère the greater part of the parish priests were either dead or sick and the churches ruined and pillaged. In the diocese of Laon alone there were about a hundred churches where Mass could not be celebrated because all the altar utensils had been stolen. The churches at Soissons, to quote the report, "have been profaned; the Blessed Sacrament has been trampled under foot, the chalices and the ciboria carried away, the baptismal fonts broken, the ornaments pillaged; so that there are in this little country more than twenty-five churches where Mass cannot be celebrated." As late as 1657, St. Vincent told the Ladies of Charity that there were still about eighty ruined churches in these provinces which he expected them to assist. In consequence the people were deprived of the consolations of religion in the midst of their trials and died without the aid of the sacraments.

We can form an idea of the extent of the misery of the two provinces especially during the first years when we recall that Abelly[52] mentions by name thirty-nine cities and includes many other towns and villages under such general terms as "and other places," "and some hundred and thirty villages of the neighborhood," "and about thirty villages of this valley," etc., as being only the ones "more particularly assisted by the charitable efforts of St. Vincent."

We might be tempted to think that the reports from which we have been quoting present only the extreme cases in order to arouse the greater sympathy of St. Vincent and the Ladies at Paris and thus to obtain more abundant alms. But a glance at Feillet's *La misère au temps de la Fronde et Saint Vincent de Paul* expels any such thought. After a thorough study of original documents pertaining to that period he is forced to the confession that it is the most

[52] Abelly, i., 276-7; Idem, ii., 516.

conspicuous in the history of France for misery, mortality, diminution of national wealth, and moral degradation. (Preface, p. iii.)

It seems certain that the work of relief was inaugurated by the Jansenist M. Charles Maignart de Bernières, an official of the parliament of Rouen. He united with other zealous individuals of the provinces to relieve the stricken poor. Friend and disciple of Port-Royal, the center of Jansenism, he found support in the Jansenists and in the members of the Parliament of Paris. It is only in the summer of 1650 that we find the first mention made of St. Vincent's activities. He soon has complete charge of the work. How or why the change took place is shrouded in obscurity.[53] But whatever the cause, the change of direction, as Feillet aptly remarks (p. 244), was a fortunate one. In a disorganized society and in the midst of a bloody anarchy a large and complete organization was first of all necessary, and Port-Royal, with its small community, was not in a position to furnish it. St. Vincent, however, was able from the first to send two trained corps into the field, the Priests of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, who had been apprenticed in the relief of public miseries during the disasters of Lorraine.

St. Vincent's organization and methods in the relief of Picardy and Champagne were in general the same as those employed in the relief of Lorraine, though we detect some distinct improvements in detail. Here, as in the case of Lorraine, all the assistance emanated from Paris. St. Vincent was the inspiration of the undertaking, and the Ladies of Charity its principal financial support. The letters from the workers in the provinces were again the vehicle by which the needs of the poor were brought before the people, appeals made, and the distribution of the alms made known to the benefactors. We find an improvement, however, in the fact that they were now printed in pamphlet form for circulation [See pp. 134-5].

[53] Feillet, 226-30. It may well be, as Feillet remarks (p. 241), that St. Vincent's tardiness in undertaking the work is explained by his enforced absence from the city from the autumn of 1648 until June, 1649 [see p. 312]. And upon his return, seeing M. de Bernières at work, he probably did not wish to intervene until circumstances made it expedient or necessary.

The money collected and received was placed in the hands of the treasurer of the Ladies of Charity at the weekly meetings. The alms in kind, especially clothing, were brought to the homes of certain of the Ladies of Charity. St. Vincent once said of these homes that they had "become as warehouses and shops of wholesale dealers."[54]

At the weekly meetings St. Vincent informed the Ladies of the more urgent needs of the provinces as communicated to him by the missionaries in the field. They discussed the best remedies and disposed accordingly of the alms on hand. Practically the entire disposition of the alms was left to the judgment of the Ladies. St. Vincent in issuing his orders to the missioners was merely carrying out their will. We read, for example, in one of his letters to Jean Parre, a lay brother of the Mission and one of the most indefatigable workers in the provinces: "The Ladies have ordered nothing new for you: they are waiting for you to see some places the most proper and most needy in order to distribute some seeds there."[55] In another letter to the same brother St. Vincent writes: "The assembly of yesterday, seeing that the poor of the environs of Rethel assail you from all sides in order to receive some assistance in their great poverty, has ordered two hundred livres for you in order that you may distribute them to the most needy; you will take them, if you please, and draw a bill of exchange for it on the above Mlle. Viole."[56]

We may quote, finally, from another letter as illustrating even in what details the Ladies of Charity took interest, and, at the same time, to what extent the workers in the provinces were dependent on instructions from Paris. "Our Ladies have considered the two samples of linsey-woolsey which you have sent," he writes again to Jean Parre, then at Ham in Picardy. "They find it good for the price, and are of the opinion that you should buy eight hundred livres

[54] *Lett.*, iii., 323, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656; *Ibid.*, ii., 532. *Cf.* also *Ibid.*, 468; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 204; Coste, 159.

[55] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 138, No. 3115, Sept. 6, 1659.

[56] *Lett.*, iii., 675-6, No. 1548, Nov. 17, 1657. Mlle. Viole was the treasurer of the Ladies of Charity. St. Vincent frequently instructs the missionaries in the provinces during this period to draw like bills of exchange on Mlle. Viole's account.

worth of it, and rather of gray than of another color if you find enough of it for so much money, both because it is more proper for the poor people . . ., and because it can be purchased cheaper. One does not think that there is enough to be gained in going for it to Amiens, presupposing that these stuffs can be had in the other nearer cities. . . . You can draw . . . a bill of exchange for this amount on Mlle. Viole."[57]

The organization of the workers in the provinces was more thorough during this period than during the relief of Lorraine. St. Vincent appointed a prudent member of his Congregation, probably René Alméras, later superior general of the Mission, as general supervisor of this charitable undertaking and of the missionaries engaged in it. He came and went from place to place in order to acquaint himself with the localities most distressed and with the true needs of the poor. It was his further duty, in the cities and villages where the missionaries could not tarry, to select a number of pious and charitable persons upon whom he could rely to make a faithful distribution of the food and the other alms which he allotted to them. He also regulated the expenses for the entire territory. He increased or retrenched the allowances according to the number of the poor and the sick in each place. He rendered his accounts of all these matters to St. Vincent by letter.

The personnel immediately charged with the administration of relief during the first few years when the misery was greatest, comprised eight or ten[58] priests and lay brothers of the Mission, together with a number of the Daughters of Charity.

The missionaries were divided into bands, each band being assigned a specific district generally outlined by the diocesan limits. But the workers were few and out of all proportion to the extent and intensity of the needed relief. It was impossible, therefore, for the missionaries to remain for any length of time in one place. They were obliged to relieve in haste the more urgent needs and then pass on to

[57] *Lett.*, iii., 515-6, No. 1432, July 28, 1657.

[58] Abelly, i., 277. Or, according to the same author (vol. ii., 516, and *Lett.*, ii., 429, No. 871, May 22, 1652), ten or twelve.

the neighboring town or village. Before departing, however, they organized, wherever possible, an emergency relief band, selecting for this purpose virtuous and reliable persons with whom they left money and remedies with instructions for the care of the sick and to whom they forwarded other alms from time to time as necessity demanded.

In some places these organizations took on a more permanent form. The missionaries assembled the most prominent ladies of the place and organized them into a stable confraternity after the manner of the Ladies of Charity at Paris and placed them under the direction of a conscientious parish priest. Such was the case, for example, at Rheims, Saint-Quentin, and Ham. But it was especially when the misery had somewhat abated after the first few years that these confraternities were established in most of the larger cities of Picardy and Champagne in deference to instructions received from St. Vincent to continue the good work of the missionaries after their final departure.[59]

While the lay brothers of the Mission were engaged almost exclusively in material relief, the priests charged themselves with the further duty of caring for the spiritual needs of the poor people. They visited the parishes bereft of pastors, gave instructions, administered the sacraments, and repaired as best they could the churches that had been pillaged and profaned by the soldiery.

Vincent considered the rehabilitation of the clergy of prime importance. In describing the work of the Parisian Ladies of Charity in behalf of these provinces, he writes in one of his letters: "They first give the parish priests or some other priests the means of subsistence that they may assist them [the poor people] spiritually."[60] This method of procedure offered a double advantage. In the first place, it left the missionaries free to devote themselves to the more specific work of relief, and secondly, the individual parish priests could then be charged with the direction of the Ladies

[59] Abelly, ii., 526; *Ibid.*, 641, *Pièces Justificatives*, III.; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 193, No. 63, Confer. of June 9, 1656; *Lett.*, iv., 344, No. 1841, To Jean Parre, May 17, 1659.

[60] *Lett.*, iii., 322, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin.

of Charity where organized, or at least, with the supervision of relief within their parishes.

In some cases the priests in need were given direct financial aid. A report from Picardy, dated 1651, for example, says: "We give two hundred livres per month for the sustenance of a number of other parish priests. By means of this assistance all the parishes of the deaneries of Guise, Marle and Vervins are served, or, at least, in each of them Holy Mass is celebrated once a week and the sacraments are administered there." A second report from Picardy of the same year states that "forty parish priests have had a relief of ten livres per month each, and by this means have been enabled to reside in their parishes and to perform all the pastoral functions."[61]

Another method of assisting the needy priests which St. Vincent employed, consisted in sending them Mass offerings. We learn from one of his letters that a lady of Paris had promised five hundred livres "to have Masses read by the poor priests of the frontier" and that she was forwarding the offerings in installments.[62] In a letter of an earlier date to the lay brother Jean Parre at Rheims, containing instructions for the distribution of alms, he says: "You draw also twenty-one livres on Mlle. Viole's account to have Masses said by the priests most in need according to the intention of the benefactors."[63]

A final method of assisting the impoverished clergy consisted in supplying them with the means of restoring their churches and with the different articles necessary for the celebration of Mass. St. Vincent, for example, in a conference to the Ladies of Charity at Paris, tells them that "albs, chasubles, missals, ciboria, etc.," have been distributed in great numbers.[64] A report from the provinces of 1654 states: "We have also furnished their churches with ornaments and missals." The report then continues: "We have had the necessary repairs made in the roof and the windows

[61] Abelly, ii., 519-21.

[62] *Lett.*, iv., 402, No. 1886. To Jean Parre at Saint-Quentin, July 12, 1659.

[63] *Lett.*, iii., 628, No. 1511, Oct. 20, 1657; *Ibid.*, 639, No. 1522, Oct. 27, 1657.

[64] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 203; Coste, 159.

to hinder the rain from falling on the sacred Host and the wind from blowing it away during the celebration of Mass."[65] In one of Vincent's letters to Jean Parre we read: "One wishes to make an effort to help put the most devastated churches in a state that one can celebrate Mass there with some decency. You are requested, therefore, to see which ones are in the greater need of this and where only a little is needed; for one does not intend to give much."[66]

St. Vincent not only furnished necessary money for the restoration of these churches, but also at times supplied a part of the labor. Thus he writes again to Jean Parre: "Although I have told M. Bourdin, the grand vicar of Noyon, that you will help ten or twelve days in erecting the chapel and in doing all that which is necessary, you can nevertheless remain there longer if there be need; and the Ladies [of Charity at Paris] leave it to your discretion to employ the time which you will deem proper, and to depart thence when it will be required to go elsewhere to assist the poor and to visit the assemblies of the Ladies, and then to return to this chapel if your presence is useful there."[67]

The Daughters of Charity who were employed in the provinces during this period, devoted themselves almost exclusively to the care of the poor sick, and more particularly to the sick in the army hospitals. Some of them were sent to nurse the wounded soldiers at Sedan in 1654 at the request of the queen mother. Before their departure St. Vincent congratulated them on the honor that was theirs and admonished them to perform their trying task of caring for the corporal and, as far as compatible, also the spiritual needs of their patients with "the charity, the humility, and the simplicity" peculiar to their institution, ever ready to forego the spiritual exercises prescribed by their rule when duty detained them at the bedside of the sick, stifling all promptings of self-complacency and vain glory, regardless alike of the praise and blame of men.[68]

Four Daughters of Charity had been sent to help nurse

[65] Abelly, ii., 521.
[66] *Lett.*, iv., 401-2, No. 1886, July 12, 1659.
[67] *Ibid.*, 402, No. 1886, July 12, 1659.
[68] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 630-5, No. 54, July 20, 1654.

five or six hundred sick and wounded soldiers in the army hospital at Calais. One or two of them succumbed to the task and the others were taken ill. Again at the request of the queen mother an additional four were sent in 1658.

The Daughters of Charity also nursed the soldiers and peasants in the hospital at Rethel. The number of the patients here increased beyond the capacity of the institution, and as many as seven hundred were transferred at different times to the hospital at Rheims. The patients continued to increase in number and the expenses became excessive. It was then decided to have the lay brothers of the Mission bring various remedies from Paris "and in particular certain very specific powders for dysenteries, fevers, and other inveterate ills, which the infirmarian of the house of Saint-Lazare compounded."[69] The results were very satisfactory. "They cured a very great number of sick who were reduced to extremes by illnesses almost hopeless, and many of them were delivered within twenty-four hours or thereabouts."[70]

The missionaries on their charitable missions through the provinces found some "hospitals abandoned or ill regulated." They reëstablished order and agreed with the administrators to receive a certain number of sick for six or seven sous per day each. "This money was punctually paid them by order of St. Vincent and through the liberalities of the assemblies of the Ladies of Charity at Paris."[71]

In other places remedies were distributed to the sick along with the other alms or the sick were left in the care of the temporary or permanent organizations of which we made mention above. A physician was kept in attendance wherever he could be procured. Thus Père Rainssant, canon

[69] We have already seen that the brothers of the Mission compounded and administered medicines during the relief of Lorraine [*cf.* p. 279]. As regards the present period, we know there were at least one or the other expert druggist and surgeon among the brothers of the Congregation. St. Vincent, for example, probably in 1651, wrote a letter to a brother of the Mission at Rome, who was skilled both as a physician and as a surgeon (*Lett.*, ii., 306-8, No. 767). In 1656 a brother was studying pharmacy at an apothecary's shop (*Lett.*, iii., 234, No. 1195, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, Jan. 28, 1656).

[70] Abelly, ii., 523.

[71] *Ibid.*, 522-3.

regular of the Order of St. Augustine and pastor of the city of Ham, reports that "all the sick of the city are well cared for; there is a good physician who visits them and orders all that is necessary for them. We have care that nothing is wanting to them."[72]

As for other places the reports say nothing as to method but merely state that the sick were carefully and successfully attended. Thus we read in one report that "our workers have taken such care of the sick that, by the grace of God, in the city of Guise alone, of five hundred sick that were there, more than three hundred have been cured; and in forty villages of the neighborhood of Laon there is such a number restored to perfect health that one would experience great difficulty in finding six poor who are not in a condition to earn their living." Another report informs us that "many of our sick are restored to health and are in a condition to earn their living."[73]

Soup, bread, meat, sweetmeats, clothes, shoes, and money were distributed to meet the respective needs of the poor as far as the supply of the alms permitted. A report sent to St. Vincent one month after the relief work was inaugurated states that "the soups given as alms from Paris to the sick refugees at Guise, Riblemont, La Fère, and Ham, have saved the lives of more than two thousand poor, who, without this help, would have been cast out of these cities where they had sought refuge and would have died out in the fields without any assistance, either spiritual or corporal."[74]

In describing the relief of the provinces, St. Vincent writes to a confrère that the missionaries "distribute in each place the clothes . . . and money which one sends them."[75] The report of 1654, for example, informs us that the missionaries had "clothed more than four hundred" poor, besides "almost six hundred orphans below the age of twelve

[72] *Ibid.*, 528. During this same time St. Vincent, in accordance with the wishes of the Ladies of Charity of Paris, instructs a cleric of the Mission who is bringing relief to twenty-two villages in the neighborhood of Lagny, to "make a bargain with the surgeon . . . to visit and attend the sick who have need of it every two days." *Lett.*, ii., 498, No. 920, To Frère Sené at Lagny, Nov. 24, 1652.

[73] Abelly, ii., 519-20.

[74] *Ibid.*, 518.

[75] *Lett.*, iii., 322, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656.

years," who were found in the neighborhood of Laon "in a pitiable state of nudity and necessity."[76]

We read in a conference of St. Vincent to the Ladies of Charity that money was distributed "in the cities and environs of Rheims, Rethel, Laon, Saint-Quentin, Ham, Marles, Sedan, and Arras."[77] But no details are given, and hence here again we are unable to discover whether or not St. Vincent had any particular norm by which he decided whether to give relief in money or in kind.

As during the relief of Lorraine, so also during this period, the missionaries had occasion to protect the girls whose virtue was endangered. In some cases these girls were given the means of livelihood, as in and around Saint-Quentin; in others, they were removed from danger and transferred to places of safety [see pp. 252-3].

Special care was taken of the orphans. St. Vincent informs the Ladies of Charity at the general assembly of July 11, 1657, that their alms are being used, among other purposes, "to receive and maintain about eight hundred orphan children of the ruined villages, both boys and girls, whom one has placed in a trade or in service after having been instructed and clothed." In 1654 the missionaries report that the alms received from Paris afforded them "the means of clothing and assisting" almost six hundred orphans below the age of twelve in the neighborhood of Laon.

In some places, and, it seems, wherever possible, the orphans were given over to the care of the women who were organized for relief work,[78] while the missionaries in cases of necessity furnished the means of support. The boys they placed as apprentices in an easy trade at an early age; the girls they placed in service.

At Ham the orphan girls were cared for "all in the same house." The parish priest, as he informs us in his report, taught them the truths of the Catholic faith, while a religious from the hospital came daily to train them in their prayers

[76] Abelly, ii., 521.

[77] *Lett. et Conférences (Suppl.)*, 203, No. 6, Confer. at Gen. Assembly of July 11, 1657.

[78] *Cf.* Abelly, ii., 526; *Avis et Conférences aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 193, No. 63, Confer. of June 9, 1656.

and in assisting at Mass. They were taught "a trade which within a few months" would "enable them to gain their own livelihood."[79] The report fails to mention the nature of the trade as well as the persons who taught it. The missionaries left money and wheat for the support of the orphanage.

The Irish refugees, driven from their country by Cromwell, presented a special problem. Many of them had been forced to join the army in France. After the campaigns of Bordeaux and Arras, they withdrew to Troyes. They arrived here in a sorry plight. They had with them more than a hundred and fifty orphans and a large number of widows, bare-footed and clothed only with the tatters of those who had died in battle. They were seen marching through the streets of the city collecting the food which the dogs had left.

The missionaries of Troyes informed St. Vincent of the situation. He in turn informed the Ladies of Charity and dispatched a missionary of Irish birth to their assistance. In obedience to the instructions of St. Vincent, he had the widows and girls taken into the hospital of Saint-Nicolas, where they learned to spin and sew. Special care was given to orphan infants. All were lodged, clothed and assisted. For this purpose six hundred livres and a quantity of clothes and other necessaries were transmitted from Paris. Other remittances followed from time to time, as necessity demanded.

The priest of the Mission also looked after the spiritual needs of his people. He preached to them twice a week during Lent to dispose them for their Easter Communion, besides discharging the ordinary pastoral functions.

These efforts of charity aroused the inhabitants of the city from their lethargy. They began to render assistance not only to these poor foreigners, but likewise to all their own citizens in need of relief.

Another field in which St. Vincent and his coworkers showed themselves active was in the burying of the dead. We shall cite but one example. When St. Vincent was informed of the fifteen hundred dead that were left on the

[79] Abelly, ii., 527-8.

field after the battles in the neighborhood of Saint-Étienne and Saint-Souplet in 1651, he commissioned the priest of the Mission who was at work in this section to hire a number of men by the day to perform this work of corporal mercy. The heat for a time threatened to hamper the work and, as the missionary later stated, had the heat come in the beginning, the men could not have been induced to undertake the task for a thousand crowns. But under the skillful direction of the missionary the work was accomplished with dispatch and at the comparative low cost of three hundred livres.

Throughout the entire period of relief St. Vincent had insisted on placing the poor in a condition to earn their own livelihood. In one of his letters concerning the use of alms in the provinces, he propounds as a general principle that "when anyone has sufficient strength to work, one buys him some tools conformable to his profession and gives him nothing more." From this he deducts the practical conclusion that "the alms are not for those who are capable of working on the fortifications or of doing anything else."[80]

In a letter to Jean Parre, he wishes that the brother "continue to take care . . . that a portion [of the alms] be destined to aid the poor people to sow a little plot of ground" and that he "see to it that all the other poor people who possess no land, earn their living (both men and women) by giving the men some implements to work and the girls and women spinning wheels and tow or wool to spin."[81]

Another feature of St. Vincent's relief work was the discriminate use he insisted be made of the alms. In the first place he himself visited the devastated provinces about 1651 in order to ascertain the true extent of the misery, as several historians attest.[82] Moreover, the priests and the brothers of the Mission were commissioned not only to distribute alms in the provinces, but also, as St. Vincent writes, to "visit the devastated districts and learn the number and

[80] *Lett.*, ii., 330, No. 789, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, April 26, 1651.

[81] *Lett.*, iv., 436, No. 1913, Aug. 9, 1659. That the missionaries engaged in the distribution of alms followed this policy of St. Vincent, is amply evidenced in their reports concerning the use made of the alms received [see p. 160].

[82] Abelly, ii., 639, *Pièces Justificatives*, III.

the needs of the poor, both the sick and others, who cannot gain a livelihood."[83]

In another letter Vincent informs Jean Parre that the benefactors have specified "a small amount with which to aid some poor people to sow a small plot of ground." In order that the brother might distribute it judiciously, he adds by way of emphasis: "I say the poorest, who without succor would not be able to do it." In the same letter and regarding the disposition of the same alms, he instructs the brother to learn "in what districts of Champagne and Picardy the poorer people are to be found who have need of this assistance." And to emphasize still more that only the most distressed are to receive help, he adds: "I say the greatest need."[84]

He instructs the same brother to visit a certain family at Rheims secretly and to assist it with alms if he find it "in great need." "In going and coming," he writes again, "observe the churches which are the most demolished and make a little note of them, as also of the most needy poor." And again: "You are requested, therefore, to see those [churches] which have the greater need" of being repaired "and where only some little thing is necessary, for one does not intend to give much."[85]

Enormous sums were required to finance the relief work. During the nine or ten years that assistance was given to the two provinces, more than 600,000 livres of alms in money and kind have been recorded as distributed. If, however, to this sum were added the alms of which St. Vincent did not have to render an account to the Ladies of Charity, it is estimated that it would amount to approximately two million livres. Moreover, it would be necessary to triple this sum to arrive at the actual value.

During the first years the expenses amounted to ten, twelve, and even sixteen thousand livres per month. As much as 22,000 livres were expended per year on grain

[83] *Lett.*, iii., 322, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656.
[84] *Lett.*, iv., 436, No. 1913, Aug. 9, 1659.
[85] *Lett.*, iii., No. 1517, Oct. 24, 1657; *Ibid.*, iv., 351, No. 1846, May 24, 1659; *Ibid.*, 401-2, No. 1886, July 12, 1659. For further instances of case investigation, see pp. 121-2.

alone, "in order to keep" the inhabitants "busy during the summer and to nourish them during the winter." But after three or four years the expenses fell to about 3,000 livres per month owing to the improved conditions which in turn, were due to the removal of the armies and to the assistance received through St. Vincent. In a letter dated July 28, 1656, Vincent designates the difficulty of procuring money and the cheapness of wheat as further reasons for the diminution of alms.[86]

As during the relief of Lorraine, so also here St. Vincent recalled most of the missionaries as soon as the improving conditions, after three or four years, permitted it. He allowed only a few to remain until the general peace of 1659. These continued to assist the poor and the pastors, and to help in repairing churches where necessary.

C. *The Relief of Poland*

While France was being ravaged by pest, famine, and war, Poland was suffering like calamities. In 1652 the pest was raging in the principal cities. St. Vincent, in a letter to one of his confrères, dated Dec. 10, 1652, has preserved for us a description of the situation at Warsaw, which we shall here cite as being fairly typical of the general desolation. "All the inhabitants who have been able to flee," he writes, "have abandoned the city, in which, as in the other places afflicted with this malady, there is scarcely any order, but on the contrary a strange disorder; for no one buries the dead there. One leaves them in the streets, where the dogs devour them. As soon as anyone is struck with this malady in a house, the others put him on the street, where he must necessarily die, for no one brings him anything to eat. The poor artisans, the poor servants of both sexes, the poor widows and orphans are entirely abandoned, for they find neither work nor persons from whom they can ask bread because all the rich have fled."[87]

[86] *Cf. Lett.*, iii., 322-3, No. 1265, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, July 28, 1656; *Lett et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 203-4, 209, Confer. to Lad. of Char. at Gen. Assemb. of July 11, 1657.

[87] *Ibid.*, 97-8, No. 3070, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan. Cited also in Abelly, ii., 246.

Before the epidemic had spent itself, war aggravated the miseries with its ravaging forces. The Cossacks were still smarting under the defeat suffered at the hands of the Poles at Beresteczko in 1651. In 1654 they allied their forces with those of the Muscovites and invaded Poland, thus inaugurating what is known in Russian history as the Thirteen Years' War, which in cruelty and brutality surpassed even the Thirty Years' War. Moreover, in the summer of the following year Charles-Gustave (Charles X) of Sweden, on the flimsiest of pretexts, forced war on Poland, and before the end of the year occupied the capital and a large part of the territory. The king, betrayed and abandoned by his own subjects, fled to Silesia (1655). Profiting by this cataclysm, the Muscovites, unopposed, quickly took possession of nearly everything that had not fallen into the hands of the Swedes. The formation of a general league against Sweden, brought about by the apprehensive court of Vienna, and an almost simultaneous outburst of religious and patriotic enthusiasm on the part of the Polish people, enabled the king to return from exile and turned the tide of victory. The Swedes were driven back and on the sudden death of Charles-Gustave (Febr. 13, 1660) made peace with Poland. The war against Muscovy was then prosecuted with renewed energy and continued beyond the period of this study.

The queen of Poland at this time was Marie-Louise of Gonzaga, scion of the Nevers-Bethel branch of the illustrious Gonzaga family of Mantua. Prior to her marriage with Wladislaus IV, king of Poland (1632-1648),[88] she had been among the most zealous of St. Vincent's Ladies of Charity at Paris. Her coronation as queen of Poland did not diminish her zeal and devotion for the poor and suffering, but only opened a wider field in which to give it expression.[89]

It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the queen, acquainted as she was with St. Vincent, his charitable zeal, and his methods, turned to him for assistance when she

[88] After his death she obtained the requisite ecclesiastical dispensation and married his brother, John II, or John Casimir (1648-1668).

[89] It must be remarked at the same time that she became infected with Jansenism during her sojourn at Paris and retained its impressions through her confessor, whom she had brought with her from France. Abelly, ii., 243, n. 2.

conceived the design of bringing relief to her unfortunate people.

At her request Vincent sent the first missionaries into Poland in 1651. They were five in number, two priests, a subdeacon, a cleric, and a lay brother, though Vincent had intended to send eight or nine.[90] Others followed from time to time as their work developed and as St. Vincent was in a position to furnish them.

The queen wished that the missionaries engage not only in the instruction of the poor people of the country districts, but particularly in the organization and supervision of the diocesan seminaries as also in the spiritual reform of the clergy. They were very well received, both by the people and by the civil authorities. The king and queen showed them every consideration and helped them wherever they could. They forwarded money to cover their traveling expenses from France and established foundations for them in Poland, which they endowed with competent revenues. Many of the Polish lords, too, were desirous of seeing the missionaries permanently established upon their estates, and hence they also made foundations.[91]

During the plague and the wars the missionaries were glad to take an active part in the relief of the suffering. St. Vincent makes special mention of two who were voluntarily laboring among those afflicted with the plague while two others were engaged in distributing the alms of the queen.[92] We know, further, that M. Lambert, who had been caring for the pest-stricken at Cracow, went on his own volition to Warsaw when the pest broke out there in 1652. Seeing the fear which the Poles had for the pest, as the queen states in a letter to St. Vincent, M. Lambert hoped in going to Warsaw, to put better order into the relief work than he who had been active there was able to maintain.[93]

[90] *Lett.*, ii., 351, No. 811, To The Queen of Poland, Sept. 6, 1651.

[91] *Cf. Lett.*, ii., pp. 410, 472-3, 491, 351, 538, 586-7; *Lett.*, iii., 56, 61, 67, 74, 142, 172, 692; *Lett.*, iv., 59.

[92] *Lett.*, ii., 492, No. 914, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa, Oct. 15, 1652.

[93] Abelly, ii., 245. To what extent the Queen was ready to show solicitude for the missionaries, is evidenced by the fact that she gave orders that M. Lambert be lodged in the castle and in the room of the king during his stay at Warsaw. *Ibid.*

He set to work to have the dead buried and the abandoned sick, both the pest-stricken and those afflicted with other maladies, brought to places where they could be provided for both corporally and spiritually. Finally, he had three or four different houses prepared as hospices, where he lodged all the other poor who had been reduced to extreme need. The men were lodged apart from the women and children. They were assisted with the alms of the queen.[94]

The work in Poland met with obstacles and reverses. M. Guillot, of whom St. Vincent makes special mention in a letter dated Oct. 15, 1652, as being engaged in the distribution of the queen's alms, wished to abandon the work in 1654. St. Vincent, "prostrated in spirit at his feet and with tears in his eyes," besought him to remain at his post, but in vain. He returned to Paris in May, 1654, while another worker, a Polish lay brother, quit the Congregation at about the same date. The former, however, repented of his step, and volunteering his services anew, was sent back to Poland by St. Vincent the following month.[95]

When the scourge of war was added to the horrors of the pest and Warsaw threatened to fall into the hands of the Swedes, the missionaries and their work received a further and more severe setback. The queen resolved to remove a part of them from the scene of danger in spite of the fact that Vincent had recommended them to the special protection of the French ambassador at the Swedish Court and despite Vincent's assurance that the Swedes, in accordance with their course of action in a former war with Germany, would not molest the priests.[96] One of the missionaries accompanied the queen to Silesia and four returned to France. Only two remained behind. These were left in comparative quiet by the Swedes for almost a year. For the invaders, encountering little or no opposition in the capture of the city, did not maltreat the inhabitants with the exception of demanding that the pastors and the religious com-

[94] *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 98, No. 3070, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, Dec. 10, 1652. Cited also in Abelly, ii., 246.

[95] *Lett.*, ii., 492, No. 914, To M. Blatiron, Supr. at Genoa: *Lett.*, iii., 19, No. 1022, To M. Guillot, Feb. 20, 1654; *Ibid.*, 27, No. 1025, Feb. 27, 1654; *Ibid.*, 49, No. 1041; *Ibid.*, 61, No. 1052.

[96] *Lett.*, iii., 185, No. 1146, To M. Ozenne, Supr. at Warsaw, Sept. 3, 1655.

munities ransom their churches at a considerable price. The missionaries were taxed 1400 livres. But the following year the Swedes recaptured the city after being driven thence by the Poles, and pillaged it, including in their devastation the church and presbytery of the missionaries, and leaving to the latter, as St. Vincent expressed it, "nothing but the liberty to withdraw." This, however, was not necessary, for the enemy soon departed to attack the Muscovites.[97] In the face of these vicissitudes and dangers, the two missionaries who remained at Warsaw persevered in the faithful discharge of their duties for several years. They consoled and served the poor, "administering the sacraments to them both in health and illness, and rendering them every kind of assistance."[98]

Conditions began gradually to improve in 1657. The queen requested the return of the four missionaries who had gone to France at the approach of the Swedish forces. The king and queen returned to Warsaw in the autumn of that year, and together with them M. Ozenne, who had been with them in exile in Silesia, and who had been superior of the mission band in Poland since the beginning of 1654.[99]

In the meantime, also the Daughters of Charity were active among the suffering poor of Poland. They, too, had been sent by St. Vincent at the solicitation of the queen. The first ones, three in number, arrived in September, 1652, at a time when the plague was already raging in Warsaw and Cracow. Others followed in the course of time.

They were no less kindly received than the missionaries had been. The queen wished to retain with her in the palace one of the first three to arrive, but the Sister answered: "Pardon me, madame, but we have given ourselves to God for the service of the poor" and asked to be sent with her

[97] *Lett.*, iii., 210-11, No. 1174, To M. Coglée, Supr. at Sedan, Nov. 29, 1655; *Ibid.*, 366, No. 1304, To M. Martin, Supr. at Turin, Oct. 20, 1656; *Avis et Confér. aux Membres de la Congrég.*, 197, No. 64, Oct. 18, 1656; *Ibid.*, 206, No. 67, Nov. 11, 1656.

[98] Abelly, ii., 248-9.

[99] *Lett.*, iii., 603, No. 1495, To M. Jolly, Supr. at Rome, Oct. 5, 1657; *Ibid.*, No. 1515, To M. Ozenne, Supr. at Warsaw, Oct. 22, 1657.

companions to Cracow to serve the pest-stricken. The queen persisted in her design, however, and five years later St. Vincent, after holding a special meeting with the Daughters of Charity at Paris on the subject, granted this same Sister permission to accompany the queen on her travels.[100]

The Daughters of Charity not only cared for the sick in the cities and towns but were also engaged with the missionaries in the distribution of the queen's alms in the devastated districts. They were also employed in nursing the wounded soldiers. Concerning these Sisters St. Vincent is quoted as saying in a conference to the Daughters of Charity at Paris: "Girls to have the courage to go to the armies? What, Daughters of Charity of the house of Paris opposite Saint-Lazare to go to visit the poor wounded not only in France but also as far away as Poland? Ah! my Daughters, is there anything equal to this? Have you ever heard it said that a like thing took place, that girls have been with the armies for a similar purpose? As for me, I have never seen this and I do not know of any congregation which has done the works which God does through yours." St. Vincent here expresses his conviction, and such, too, is the fact, that his Daughters of Charity were the first organization of religious women to enter upon the field of battle as war nurses.[101]

Vincent, continuing his discourse, traces out (with feeling) the corporal and spiritual purpose of such an occupation and lauds the nobility of the work. He exclaims: "Ah, Savior! Is it not admirable to see poor girls enter upon a siege?[102] And for what purpose? To renew what the malicious there destroy. Yes, men go thither to destroy, to kill, and they, the Sisters, to give back life through their attentions; the men sent other men to hell (for among the carnage there are necessarily some poor souls in mortal sin),

[100] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, i., 516, No. 43, Feb. 2, 1653; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 358-62, No. 14, Mar. 23, 1657; *Lett.*, iii., 142, No. 1113, To M. Ozenne, Supr. at Warsaw, Mar. 12, 1655.

[101] *Lett.*, ii., 429-30, No. 871, To M. Vageot, Supr. at Saintes, May 22, 1652; *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 290-1, No. 77, Sept. 8, 1657.

[102] He refers to the siege of Warsaw where the Sisters in question were then engaged.

and behold poor girls do what they can to have them go to heaven! . . . Has it ever entered the human mind that young ladies should go among the armies to repair the evil that men do there? Is this not quite extraordinary?"

The king and queen were so well pleased with the conduct, zeal, and ability of the Daughters of Charity that they once spent an entire day with them to show their satisfaction and appreciation.[103]

A third class of workers introduced at this time into Poland at the request of the queen and through the efforts of Vincent de Paul were the religious of Sainte-Marie. They were to engage in rescuing fallen girls as they were doing at Paris [see pp. 249-50]. Their entrance into this new field of labor, however, did not take place without opposition. To utilize St. Vincent's mode of expressing it, the wicked spirit, foreseeing the good which they would accomplish, incited their parents to procure a juridical prohibition, confirmed by the Archbishop of Paris, against the superioress of Sainte-Marie sending their daughters so far away. St. Vincent suggested to the queen of Poland that this opposition could be easily overcome by her writing personally to the Archbishop and by having the queen of France use her influence with him.[104]

It developed, however, that the opposition was more obstinate than at first thought. After nine months, the opposition of the relatives was still a matter of concern, and the Archbishop remained persistent in his refusal. According to a letter of St. Vincent, written at this time, the Archbishop's refusal was rooted in wounded pride. He was peeved because the queen of Poland and the religious of Sainte-Marie had opened mutual negotiations without first consulting him though in other cases the religious had founded new establishments under similar circumstances without incurring his displeasure. Again St. Vincent suggested that the queen write a personal letter to the prelate, though he was much less sanguine than on the former occasion in his hopes regarding the result. He may possibly be

[103] *Confér. aux Filles de la Char.*, ii., 652, No. 108, July 24, 1660; *Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.)*, 191, No. 3, July 24, 1660.

[104] *Lett.*, ii., 352, No. 811, To The Queen of Poland, Sept. 6, 1651.

induced to relent, he says in substance, if the queen "writes him in French a cordial letter which pleases him."[105]

At last, after another year's waiting, the religious of Sainte-Marie were ready to depart for Poland. They set out in August, but their ship was captured by English pirates and detained for a long time at Dover. After many difficulties they arrived at Warsaw in the summer of 1654.[106]

A fourth type of relief agencies established in Poland at this time were confraternities of charity after the model of those at Paris and throughout France. We know, for example, that the pious ladies of Lithuania wished to organize such a confraternity. St. Vincent sent them a constitution, while the queen of Poland wished to send a priest of the Mission to organize the conference, and a Daughter of Charity to train the ladies in the care of the poor sick. St. Vincent heartily approves of the plan but prudently suggests that "it will be necessary that this priest has already made similar establishments . . .; for if a novice is sent thither who has no experience along these lines, I doubt very much if he will succeed with it."[107]

A glance at the relief work of Poland reveals a fundamental difference in the directing personnel as compared with that of the devastated provinces of France. St. Vincent merely furnished the workers and contented himself with humble suggestions concerning their placement, type of work, and the like. The queen was in immediate and full charge, and supplied the necessary means from her own revenues[108] or procured them by her personal effort. She was always in close touch with the work and took a personal and active interest in it. With her own hands she "spun and wound into skeins the thread that was necessary to sew the linen of the poor." This humble charity so struck St. Vin-

[105] *Ibid.*, 439, No. 879, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Warsaw, June 21, 1652. We find here an exemplification of what we styled St. Vincent's diplomacy in the fore part of this work [p. 40].

[106] *Ibid.*, 539-40, No. 956, To M. Desdames, Supr. at Warsaw, June 6, 1653; *Ibid.*, 579, n. 1; *Ibid.*, iii., 66, No. 1057, To M. Ozenne, Supr. at Warsaw, July 31, 1654.

[107] *Lett.*, iii., 142, No. 1113, To M. Ozenne, Mar. 12, 1655.

[108] Before the pest had broken out on a large scale in Poland, she even contributed 12,000 livres to the relief fund at Paris. *Lett.*, ii., 458-9, No. 895, To Mlle. de Lamoignon, Aug. 4, 1652.

cent with admiration that in a letter to the queen he styled it "without precedent in the Church of God." "We know, indeed," he continued in the same letter, "that history makes known to us a princess who spun the thread which should serve to clothe her own person. But I do not recall anyone who has carried piety to the point which your Majesty has done in using the work of her hands in the service of the poor."[109]

D. *The Relief of Gennevilliers*

Additional sufferings fell upon the inhabitants of France in 1652 in consequence of an almost general inundation of the Seine. St. Vincent de Paul, in addition to his many other charities, charged himself in this crisis with the relief of Gennevilliers, a village about two leagues distant from Paris, whose "poor inhabitants were besieged with water and hunger and reduced to the last extremity."[110]

St. Vincent had large quantities of bread baked at Saint-Lazare at the expense of the community and transported to the flooded village in a huge cart by members of his Congregation. They were halted by the waters at a considerable distance from the scene of misery, but they signaled to the sufferers, half-submerged in their homes, and a fisherman came in a boat to meet them. Laden with provisions, the fisherman returned. He arrived at the village and handed bread to the most daring of the inhabitants who hung over a wall. These, who were paid in money for their courage, passed it to the more timid. The boat also entered the village and made distributions through the windows. This continued for three or four days in the midst of great perils.

Before departing, the missionaries left the remaining alms with the parish priest that he might make a judicious distribution of them, since he was acquainted with the particular needs of each of his parishioners. After the calamity had passed, the inhabitants deputed a delegation of their most prominent citizens to express their gratitude and appreciation to St. Vincent.

[109] *Lett.*, iv., 446, No. 1921, Aug. 22, 1659.
[110] Abelly, iii., 174-5.

E. *The Relief of Paris and Environs During the Fronde*

While St. Vincent was extending his relief to the provinces, the victims of the Fronde offered him ample opportunity to exercise his charity in and around the capital. The Fronde,[111] regarded in its wider aspects, was a reaction on the part of the nobility, the people and the Parliament against the centralized absolutism effected especially by Richelieu and personified at this time in his successor, the Prime Minister Cardinal Mazarin.

The first, or "parliamentary," Fronde was occasioned directly by a tax levied in May, 1648, on the judicial members of the Parliament of Paris. This tax was met not only with a refusal to pay, but at the same time with the repudiation of earlier financial edicts and even with a demand for the acceptance of a scheme of constitutional reforms which a committee of the Parliament had drafted. In August, 1648, Mazarin suddenly arrested the leaders of the insurgents, whereupon Paris rose in rebellion and barricaded the streets. The court having no army at its immediate disposal to enforce its authority, was compelled to relent. It released the prisoners, promised to effect the demanded reforms, and fled from Paris to Saint-Germain-en-Laye. The Peace of Rueil was signed on March 11, 1649, after little blood had been shed.

The Peace of Rueil lasted until the end of 1649. The princes, readmitted at court, renewed their intrigues against Mazarin who, on January 14, 1650, suddenly had three of their leaders arrested. The war which followed is known as the second, or "Princes'," Fronde.

Mazarin, against whom the rebellion was particularly directed, was obliged to flee for safety to the electorate of Cologne in February, 1651. From here he continued to influence the queen and to govern the kingdom by means of secret letters. His absence, however, left the field free for mutual jealousies, and during the remainder of the year anarchy held sway in France. The insurrection was grad-

[111] The word means a sling and was applied to these civil strifes either from the circumstance that the windows of Mazarin's adherents were pelted with stones by the Paris mob, or because of their farcical resemblance to a boy's game.

ually abating towards the end of the year when the return of Mazarin reënkindled the feuds. After another six months of warfare with fluctuating success, the people became weary of civil strife. Mazarin, feeling that public sentiment was solidly against him, facilitated peace by exiling himself for the second time to Bouillon. Thereupon the *bourgeois* of Paris, quarreling with the princes, permitted the king to enter the city on October 21, 1652. Mazarin returned unopposed in February, 1653. The Fronde, as a civil war, was now over. But the war with Spain, which had been helping the rebels throughout the second Fronde, continued until the Peace of the Pyrenees, in November, 1659.

After the departure of the court to Saint-Germain at the beginning of the first Fronde, all public order was subverted in the city. The exercise of justice ceased. Each thought only of saving his own life. Work ceased among the artisans, and traffic and commerce among the merchants; the gates of the city were closed to man and merchandise alike. The disorders of the besieged and besieging soldiers of the capital inspired horror and wrought ruin.

St. Vincent, foreseeing the indescribable misery and suffering to which these events must inevitably lead within a short time if permitted to run their course, resolved to strike at the root of the evil. He determined to have an interview with the prime minister and the queen, whose plan of starving the rebellious city into subjection he deemed too severe. He accordingly braved the adverse public opinion on the one hand, and the danger of disgrace at the royal court or exile on the other, and made his way to Saint-Germain. His mission proved futile. But he had the satisfaction before God of having done his duty in trying to avert the evil.[112]

[112] See pp. 62-3. This incident alone is sufficient refutation of the calumnious insinuation that St. Vincent, because of his influence with the queen and the first ministers of the State, was responsible for the public miseries, the state burdens, and the taxes from which the people suffered. He was, in fact, publicly accused of this one day as he was returning from the city to Saint-Lazare. Vincent, who, in his humility, was wont to attribute the public calamities to his sins, got down from his horse, knelt in the street, avowed his guilt, and begged pardon of God and his accuser. The man, in consequence, was so confused at his temerity that he came to Saint-Lazare the following day to make amends. St. Vincent received him as a friend, and persuaded him to remain in the house six or seven days, during which time he made a spiritual retreat and a general confession. Abelly, iii., 235-6.

St. Vincent had gone to Saint-Germain without communicating to anyone the purpose of his mission in order to be better able to assure the queen that he came to plead for peace uninfluenced by partisanship. This mode of action, highly commendable in itself, was misinterpreted by the suspicious Parisians. His interview with the queen branded him in their eyes as a royalist and a declared enemy of the Fronde. Under these circumstances he deemed it imprudent and unsafe to return to the city. He went, therefore, to Villepreux, on the estates of the Gondi family, and thence to a little farm about two leagues from Étampes, which had been given in charity to the house of Saint-Lazare. Here he remained for the space of a month, suffering from the extreme cold of the winter. While here he learned that the other farms of Saint-Lazare in the neighborhood of Paris whence his community derived their principal means of assistance, had been pillaged by the soldiers. They had carried away the furniture, driven off the herds, and taken possession of eighteen or twenty hogsheads of wheat.

Also while here, he was informed of the retaliation resorted to by those whom he, as a member of the Council of Conscience, had justly excluded from ecclesiastical dignities, and by those who misunderstood his purpose in visiting the royal court at Saint-Germain. A counsellor, pretending to be charged with the authority of the Parliament, took possession of the keys of the house and the granaries of Saint-Lazare under the pretext of taking an inventory. He seized all the grain and flour and had it carted off. In the meantime, six to eight hundred soldiers were lodged in the house. They "made a frightful waste and havoc," and finding nothing whereon to vent their fury and malice, they set fire to the wood piles and reduced them to ashes. The Parliament, being informed of this, expressed regret that such deeds were perpetrated in its name, the soldiers were withdrawn but Saint-Lazare received no indemnification.[113]

St. Vincent did not return to Paris until June, 1649,[114]

[113] Abelly, i., 267-70; Idem, iii., 188; Collet, 183-4.

[114] Abelly [vol. i., 274] says *July, 1649,* but letters were written by St. Vincent from Paris as early as June 18 and June 19, 1649. *Cf. Lett.,* ii., 163, No. 649 and No. 650.

after the absence of five months, and three months after the signing of the Peace of Rueil. He had spent the interval in visiting the establishments of the missionaries and Daughters of Charity at le Mans, Angers, Saint-Méen, etc. He had the intention of continuing these visitations for some time, but returned to Paris in deference to the express order of the queen.

But, though absent from Paris, and notwithstanding the losses suffered by Saint-Lazare at the hands of the soldiers, he was not unmindful of the capital's suffering poor. Saint-Lazare was now so poor that it was unable even to support its customary inmates. Many of these had to be sent to le Mans, Richelieu, and other places. Still St. Vincent wrote several letters to M. Lambert, the acting superior, in which he urged him always to continue his alms to the poor. He instructed him to borrow sixteen or twenty thousand livres for the purpose. Bread and soup were daily distributed to two or three thousand poor people. Two or three large caldrons of soup and three or four measures of wheat were used every day, in spite of its extreme scarcity and exorbitant cost. A contemporary ecclesiastic testifies that the distributions were made "with the same abundance and liberality as though the wheat had cost the house nothing." The brother who had charge of the grain declared that ten hogsheads of wheat had been used to feed the poor during the three months' duration of the first Fronde. At the end of this time, also Saint-Lazare was on the point of suffering great need, but with the temporary return of peace, the necessaries of life could again be purchased in the city.[115]

St. Vincent wished, too, that the Ladies of Charity lend their assistance to the work. He tells them in one of his letters to them that their many private charities might excuse them in the sight of men from taking an active part in alleviating the public misery, but not before God.[116]

Before the inhabitants of Paris and vicinity had time adequately to recover from the miseries of the first Fronde, they were hurled into new and greater calamities by the out-

[115] *Lett.*, ii., 156-7, No. 644, To M. Portail, Confrère at Marseilles, Mar. 4, 1649.

[116] *Ibid.*, 152-4.

break of fresh hostilities at the beginning of 1650. Concerning the deplorable conditions that prevailed within the city during this period, we shall not go into detail. Suffice it to quote St. Vincent's summary description of the situation. "We are here in disorders more than ever," he writes. "Paris is swarming with poor, because the armies have forced the poor people of the country districts to seek refuge here." [117]

The encampment and fighting of the armies in the environs of Paris spread desolation and misery over the entire territory. The general desolation, however, is fairly well reflected in the miseries inflicted upon Etampes. This city had been subjected to the horrors of several sieges. Its inhabitants, and those of the villages in the vicinity, were reduced in consequence to a deplorable state of poverty and suffering. Most of them had fallen sick and they were so destitute of assistance that there was none to give them even a glass of water. To increase the miseries, the atmosphere was infected with the rotting refuse and putrefying carrion and human corpses that were left to decay on all sides. From all this such a repelling stench emanated that one could scarcely draw near.

St. Vincent undertook to relieve this distress in all its forms, although Saint-Lazare was in a position to contribute but very little.[118] Throughout the whole period he strove to cure the evil at its root. He endeavored to bring about peace between the rebels and the king by acting as mediator between the contending parties. The details of his conduct while acting this delicate rôle, however, have been lost to history owing to the secrecy essential for the success of the negotiations. Still we know that St. Vincent went back and forth several times exchanging messages, and conditions and terms of peace.

A letter written in Vincent's own hand to Mazarin while the royal court was at Saint-Denis, at the beginning of July,

[117] *Ibid.*, 429, No. 871, To M. Vageot, Supr. at Saintes, May 22, 1652.

[118] *Ibid., cf.*, 394, No. 847; *Ibid.*, 398, No. 850; *Ibid.*, 472, No. 903. That Saint-Lazare was truly in need is evident from the fact that St. Vincent, who was ever most conscientious in paying his debts, finds it impossible to acquit himself of four thousand livres in 1652 and begs his creditor for a postponement. *Ibid.*, 453, No. 888, July 30, 1652.

1652, was found after his death. It will serve to give us an idea of the nature of his efforts. "I most humbly beseech your Eminence," he writes, "to pardon me for having come back [from Saint-Denis] last night without having had the honor of receiving your commands. I was compelled to it because I was indisposed. The Duke of Orleans [one of the rebel princes] comes to inform me that he will send M. d'Ornano [his secretary] to me to make the answer upon which he has desired to come to an agreement with the Prince [the Prince of Condé, leader of the rebellious forces]. I told the queen yesterday of the conference I have had the honor of having with the two separately. . . . I told his Royal Highness [evidently the Duke of Orleans] that if one reinstalled the king in his authority and gave an award of justification, your Eminence would make the satisfaction one desires [i. e., retire from the court]; that one could not easily adjust this grave matter through deputies; and that there needs must be persons of mutual confidence who would treat the things amicably. He showed by word and gesture that this was agreeable to him and answered me that he would confer with his council. Tomorrow morning I hope to be in a position to bring his answer to your Eminence, God helping." What transpired in the interval we do not know, but six weeks later Mazarin was slowly making his way toward the frontiers. Mazarin, however, did not wish the king to return to Paris without him. Accordingly, on September 11, St. Vincent addressed to him another letter in which he prudently and considerately, yet pointedly, refuted the reasons and pretexts upon which he might base his egotistic ambitions and showed him it was a matter of indifference whether he returned before or after the royal party. He showed him further that it was the height of imprudence to forbid the princes and their deputations access to the king and queen, and urged him to use his influence with the latter in having them return immediately "to take possession of their city and of the hearts of Paris." [119] As a matter of fact, the royal party entered Paris on October 21, 1652, and Mazarin the following February.

[119] *Ibid.*, 475-8, No. 906.

Vincent gives us another example of his fundamental thoroughness in relief work during this period. When the missionaries arrived at Étampes to relieve the distress there, one of their first steps was to hire men from other places, "not without a great expense," to come with carts and remove all the filth and refuse from the city. Thereupon they buried the decomposing corpses and had the streets and houses disinfected "to render them habitable." [120]

The relief work of Paris and the environs was under the immediate supervision and direction of St. Vincent. The personnel of his relief organization was, however, on the whole the same as during the relief of the provinces: the priests and brothers of the Congregation, the Daughters of Charity, the Ladies of Charity and other generous persons.

The priests in some places were engaged in corporal, as well as spiritual, works of mercy. A number of parishes, however, were shepherdless. Their pastors had either died or fled. The priests found the double work too exhausting. Accordingly, St. Vincent sent a number of Daughters of Charity to alleviate the material distress, thus leaving the priests free to devote their entire energies to the spiritual needs of the poor. They "went from one end of the parishes to the other to visit and console these poor afflicted, to read Holy Mass for them, to instruct them, to administer the sacraments to them; all with the requisite permissions and approbations on the part of the superiors." [121] This concluding remark of the biographer is significant. It is further testimony of Vincent's wonted policy of entering upon any relief only with full permission of the local authorities and of withdrawing at once if such permission was not forthcoming.

The Daughters of Charity, as also the missionaries, made heroic sacrifices in behalf of the poor. They were deterred by no difficulty and frequently exposed themselves to the danger of contracting the sicknesses they strove to cure. Several of them, in consequence, died martyrs to the cause, while others were sick for a long time.

[120] Abelly, i., 282.
[121] *Ibid.*, 283.

The Ladies of Charity, as usual, limited their activities principally to the giving and collecting of alms, and in concurrence with St. Vincent, to the disposing of them. Meetings were held daily, where the needs of the poor and means and methods of relief were discussed.[122] Some of the Ladies, however, were called upon by St. Vincent to devote themselves personally to the care of the religious women, and the women and girls who sought refuge in Paris.

Among the other generous persons, both men and women, who lent invaluable aid to the cause of charity during this period, M. du Plessis, baron of Montbard, one of the most charitable men of the time, is worthy of special mention here. To him especially is due the credit of having conceived the idea of establishing a warehouse for charitable use, and of having proposed the working plan in consequence of which it proved so successful and valuable.

The prime purpose of this warehouse was to serve as a receiving station for the alms in kind which most of the people of the time could donate in charity more readily than money. It proved a wonderful success and before long others were established in various parts of the city, to which, as St. Vincent says, all Paris contributed its alms.[123] They became an inexhaustible source of supplies for a period of six or seven months. Clothes, linens, furniture, tools, drugs for the composition of medicines, salt, flour, peas, butter, and all the other necessaries of life, and even chalices, ciboria, missals, sacred linens, and other things necessary to furnish the pillaged churches, were here deposited daily. They were then transferred to certain central stations in the country and finally distributed to the poor with order and discretion by the workers in the field.

It must not be imagined, however, that St. Vincent provided for all the poor of the city during these troubles. Their numbers were too great. Hence he directed his care particularly to those refugees who had found temporary shelter in the neighborhood of Saint-Lazare to the number of seven or eight hundred. Moreover, there were other agencies in the field. He himself says in one of his letters writ-

[122] *Lett.*, ii., 429, No. 871, To M. Vageot, Supr. at Saintes, May 22, 1652.
[123] *Ibid.*, 379, No. 832, To M. Lambert, Supr. at Warsaw, Jan. 3, 1652.

ten at this time that "the men of the Blessed Sacrament are doing wonders in this city" for charity, "and the religious in the country districts for the distribution and the assistance of the poor people." "We have there only three persons," he continues, "besides those whom we still have at Étampes, because the death of our priests has prevented us from giving more; and hence one has called upon the religious." [124]

The most extensive demand made upon the charity of St. Vincent and his workers consisted in furnishing the poor with food and other necessaries of life. A certificate of June 5, 1652, written and signed by St. Vincent, will serve to give us a general idea of the nature of the work. It was written at the demand of the guards of Paris, who wished to know whence came and whither went the carts of provisions that passed daily through the gates of the city. "I, the undersigned, superior of the Congregation of the Priests of the Mission," he writes, "certify to all whom it may concern that, upon receiving notice from some pious persons of this city that half of the inhabitants of Palaiseau were sick, of whom ten or twelve died each day, and at the request which they have made to me to send some priests for the corporal and spiritual assistance of this poor afflicted people because of the sojourn of the army in this place for the period of twenty days, we have dispatched thither four priests and a surgeon to assist these poor people; and we have forwarded to them every day (one or two excepted) since the eve of the feast of the Blessed Sacrament sixteen large white breads, fifteen pints of wine, and yesterday some meat; and the above priests of our Company having told me it is nesessary to send some flour and a hogshead of wine for the assistance of the said poor sick and of those of the surrounding villages, I have ordered a three-horse cart to depart today laden with four measures of flour and two half-hogsheads of wine for the relief of the said poor of Palaiseau and the surrounding villages." [125]

The missionaries went each day from village to village with beasts laden with the victuals and the clothes which

[124] *Ibid.*, 379, No. 832, To M. Lambert, Jan. 3, 1652.
[125] Abelly, iii., 176; *Lett.*, ii., 431, No. 873, June 5, 1652.

were being forwarded to them from Paris, and distributed them to the poor "according to the needs of each one."[126]

In the meantime, soup kitchens or stations were being established in all the centers of distress, whence soup was daily distributed to all the needy. St. Vincent writes in 1652 that soup was being distributed to almost fifteen thousand poor, residents and refugees of the city of Paris, "who would die of hunger without this assistance." [127] The seven or eight hundred who had taken refuge in the vicinity of Saint-Lazare, came in the morning and again in the afternoon to receive food at the door of Saint-Lazare. The Daughters of Charity, at the same time, were boiling and distributing soup daily to thirteen hundred poor at the house of Mlle. le Gras. In the suburb of Saint-Denis they were rendering like relief to eight hundred refugees and were also busy in a number of the parishes. In the parish of Saint-Paul alone four or five of them distributed soup to the poor, who numbered daily from five to eight thousand, besides caring for the sixty or eighty sick who were under their charge.[128]

They gave similar assistance to the poor in the cities and villages of the vicinity of Paris. But before establishing these centers of relief, the missionaries first took a general survey, traversing the entire region and ascertaining which localities had suffered most from the soldiers and where the people were most in need. Hence it is that particularly Étampes, Guillerval, Villeconnin, Étrechy and Saint-Arnoult became the centers to which the destitute of the respective places and of their environs flocked to receive their daily portion.

St. Vincent, however, did not content himself with assisting only those who applied for relief. He knew that shame and other reasons always kept some, especially among the refugees, from joining the bread line with the ordinary poor. He therefore, gave orders that a priest accompanied

[126] Abelly, i., 285.

[127] *Lett.*, ii., 438, No. 878, To M. Lagault, Doctor of Sorbonne at Rome, June 21, 1652; *Ibid.*, 441, No. 879, To M. Lambert, June 21, 1652.

[128] *Ibid.*, 441-2, No. 879; *Ibid.*, 443, No. 880, To the Daughters of Char. at le Valpuiseau, June 23, 1652.

by a lay brother should seek them out in their dwellings, which only too often were but hovels or garrets. In this manner they had an opportunity of studying the individual needs of these poor and of giving them the necessary relief, and also the priest was always at hand to administer spiritual aid to the sick where needed.

Moreover, throughout this entire period, St. Vincent always had some lay brother on the highways in the vicinity of Paris to distribute relief to those who were otherwise unable to receive it.

Particular care was taken of the orphans. At Étampes, for example, a special house was set aside for the purpose. The orphans of the city and of the neighboring villages were assembled and brought hither, where they were given food and clothing and were cared for spiritually.

As during the other periods of relief, so also here the unprotected girl was a problem with which St. Vincent found himself confronted. Eight or nine hundred women and girls were provided for. St. Vincent entrusted this work to the personal care of the Ladies of Charity. The Ladies divided them into groups—at times as many as a hundred in a group, as, for example, in the suburb of Saint-Denis—and lodged each group in a separate house, rented, if necessary, for the purpose. Here they were furnished with all necessaries of life and, at the same time, given religious instruction.

Among those who fled to Paris before the approaching armies were also a number of religious women. Some were without shelter at all, others were forced to take lodging in places not above suspicion, while others lived with their relatives. Many of them were, therefore, in physical need, while all were in greater or less moral danger. Vincent had them taken to a convent especially prepared for them and placed under the direction of the Sisters of Sainte-Marie.[129]

A further class of indigents to whom St. Vincent extended his charity at this time were the poor parish priests, vicars, and other priests who had sought shelter in

[129] *Ibid.*, 429, No. 871; *Ibid.*, 438, No. 878; *Ibid.*, 441, No. 879.

the capital. They were lodged at Saint-Lazare, where all their needs, physical and spiritual, were amply provided for.

During this period, as always, St. Vincent did not forget the soul while ministering to the needs of the body. Some of the missionaries were deputed exclusively to the care of souls, as we have seen, while others divided their energies between the spiritual and the corporal. In 1652 Vincent attended a meeting concerning the spiritual care of the refugees in Paris, at which the Archbishop of Rheims presided. To establish his claim to give missions to these poor, Vincent based his argument on the legal maxim that one may take possession of one's property wherever found. Now, he argues, "we have the obligation to go to serve" the poor people "in the country when they are there; they are our portion; and now that they come to us . . ., it seems that we are more strictly obliged to labor for their salvation in their present affliction, under the good pleasure, however, of his Grace the Archbishop." His characteristic readiness to change his rules and organization to meet present needs overcame the objection that the missionaries were forbidden to conduct missions in episcopal cities. Concerning this objection he writes: "I have answered that the submission we owe to the prelates does not allow us to dispense ourselves from such missions when they command us to give them."[130]

Within a week after this meeting the missionaries were conducting a mission in the church of Saint-Lazare for the eight hundred refugees in that district and also for those of the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet.[131] It appears that the mission was almost continuous at Saint-Lazare. When the poor assembled to receive their daily alms, a sermon was preached to them after which the men and boys were taken into the cloister. Here they were divided into nine or ten bands, with priests assigned to each for more particular instruction, while the women and girls were given further instruction in the church. St. Vincent took an active part in these instructions. The orphans and the girls and women who fell to the charge of St. Vincent and his workers

[130] *Ibid.*, 435, No. 876, To M. d'Horgny, Supr. at Rome, June 13, 1652.
[131] *Ibid.*, 440, No. 879, To M. Lambert, June 21, 1652.

also received religious instruction. A special spiritual retreat was given to the religious women who had fled to Paris.

F. *The Relief of Mâcon*

Though prior in time to the public miseries treated in the preceding pages, the relief of Mâcon may well find a place here. In 1623, on his way from Marseilles to Paris, St. Vincent passed through the city of Mâcon. Here he found the inhabitants in a most deplorable state of spiritual and corporal misery. They were ignorant, or oblivious, of their religious duties and lived in open violation of the laws of God and Church. They lined the streets and filled the churches begging alms with insolence and effrontery.

St. Vincent had compassion on them and resolved to relieve the situation. He began by obtaining the consent of the bishop, Louis Dinet, and by enlisting the coöperation of the two ecclesiastical chapters of the city, of the lieutenant general, and of other ecclesiastical and civil dignitaries. A constitution was then drafted and the poor were divided into two classes: the beggars, and the poor who were ashamed to beg. A list was drawn up of all the poor who wished to remain in the city. The beggars, who numbered about three hundred, were to receive alms on certain days. They were obliged to assemble at the church of Saint-Nizier to assist at Mass and spiritual instruction. After the services they received bread and money in proportion to their needs, their inability to work, and the number of their children. Wood was also distributed during the winter months. All who received alms were obliged to receive the sacraments of the Church once a month. They were forbidden to beg under penalty of forfeiting their regular weekly allowance. It was also withheld in case of any justified complaint against them.

The passers-by were given free lodging for the night and sent off in the morning with two sous. The poor who were ashamed to beg were provided with food in health and with medicines in sickness.

Both agents and resources were requisite for the enforcement of these regulations. The former were procured by

the establishment of two associations, one of men, the other of women. Each was divided into several committees charged with the care of the healthy, the sick, the poor of the city, and the strangers, of their respective sex.

The most prominent ladies of the city belonged to the association of the women, while the bishop, the dean of the cathedral, the provost of Saint-Pierre, and the lieutenant general, headed the men. They formed a bureau composed of ten directors. Of these two were ecclesiastics, one of whom presided in the absence of the bishop; the others were civil officials and prominent laymen.

The members of both associations met weekly to indicate the sick and the poor who were to receive assistance and to eliminate from the list those who had become unworthy or who were no longer in need. They visited the bashful poor, and more particularly the sick, at their homes twice a week. The work began without a common treasury, but St. Vincent knew how to interest and enthuse the great and the lowly so that all contributed in money or kind according to their ability.

Within the short space of three weeks, the face of the city was changed. St. Vincent, writing to Mlle. le Gras twelve years later, says of his work here: "When the confraternity was established at Mâcon all ridiculed me and pointed their finger at me in the streets; and when the work was completed all burst into tears of joy, and the officials of the city did me so much honor upon departing that, not being able to bear it, I was compelled to leave by stealth in order to evade this demonstration."[132]

The scope of the confraternity was extended in the course of time. Its members labored for the abolition of duelling and for the termination of dissensions and lawsuits. It was the success and the splendid results of this and similar confraternities of St. Vincent that inspired the clergy of France, assembled at Pontoise in 1670, to exhort all the bishops of the realm to establish them in the dioceses.[133]

The outstanding features of the work of St. Vincent at Mâcon were the prominent rôle played by the civil and

[132] *Lett.*, i., 107-8, No. 101, July 21, 1635.
[133] Abelly, i., 96-99; Maynard, i., 144-8.

ecclesiastical authorities, the bureau of charity established for the elimination of begging, the visiting of the sick and the shamed poor in their homes, and the night asylums. If St. Vincent deviated from his wonted programme in some of these points, he thereby merely showed his ability of adapting his efforts to local exigencies and to the wishes of those with whom he had to deal.

The relief which St. Vincent administered during the public calamities, extended with practically no interruption over a period of more than twenty years. His first biographer styles the complex of these charitable undertakings "a masterpiece of charity which has never yet had its like." Ancient historians record, he continues, various examples of extreme miseries caused by war, of devastated cities, provinces, and entire kingdoms, but one fails to read that in the midst of these horrors and disorders the spiritual and corporal works of mercy were performed for the relief, not only of a few individuals, but of entire peoples; not only during a passing encounter or for a few days, but during a long sequel of years, and that, too, in regions where justice had lost its force, where legitimate authority was no longer recognized, and where laws and ordinances of kings were trampled under foot.[134] St. Vincent expressed himself similarly at times in his conferences to the Ladies of Charity.[135]

Letters written by the civil and ecclesiastical officials of the aided cities testify to the good results produced while at the same time giving expression to the people's gratitude.[136] An altar was consecrated to the honor of St. Vincent in the cathedral of Verdun, in memory of the benefits he procured for the inhabitants of that city and of entire Lorraine. After the relief of the village of Gennevilliers, the people deputed their principal citizens to express their gratitude and appreciation to St. Vincent for his timely efforts in their behalf.

[134] Abelly, ii., 483-4.

[135] *Cf., v.g., Lett. et Confér. (Suppl.),* 205 and 215, Confer. at Gen. Assemb. of Lad. of Char., July 11, 1657.

[136] *Cf., v.g.,* Testimony of Jean Midot, vicar general of Toul, 1639; of civil officials of Metz, 1640; of civil officials at Pont-à-Mousson, 1640. Abelly, ii., 487-9, 493.

But the greatest and most far-reaching mark of recognition that Vincent's charitable interest and efficiency elicited during this period is contained in a royal ordinance of safe-conduct issued about 1652 in favor of the missionaries engaged in the relief of Picardy and Champagne. The ordinance opens with the statement that the king has been informed of the miseries of these two provinces, of the alms donated by the Parisians, and of the efforts of "the priests of the Mission of M. Vincent and other charitable persons sent" to distribute them to the most needy. The king has likewise been informed, the ordinance continues, that "the soldiers passing through, or sojourning in, the places where the said missionaries are employed, have seized and rifled the ornaments of the church and the provisions of victuals, clothes, and other things destined for the poor, so that if they have no security on the part of his Majesty, it will be impossible for them to continue a work so charitable and so important for the glory of God and for the relief of the subjects of his Majesty."

The king, we read further, "desiring to contribute to this all that lies in his power, at the advice of the queen regent, most expressly forbids the governors and their lieutenants general in their provinces and armies, field-marshals and governors of the camp, colonels, captains, and other officers commanding their troops, both cavalry and infantry, French and foreigner, of whatsoever nation they be, to lodge, or allow to be lodged, any soldiers in the villages of the said frontiers of Picardy and Champagne for which the said priests of the Mission will have demanded of them protection to assist the poor and the sick and to distribute the provisions they will bring thither, so that they may there enjoy full and complete liberty to exercise charity in the manner which, and towards whom, they deem fit. Moreover, his Majesty forbids all the soldiers to seize anything from the priests of the Mission and from persons employed with them or by them under penalty of death; taking them under his protection and special safe-keeping by enjoining very expressly upon all the bailiffs, seneschals, judges, provosts of the marshals, and other officers whom it may concern, to see to the execution and publication of this present and to

prosecute the offenders so that their punishment may serve as an example."[137]

This ordinance, as the text itself states, was issued at the advice of the queen regent. She, in turn, was undoubtedly prompted by St. Vincent, who had seen the need of such a measure on his tour of investigation and inspection in the provinces shortly before. The ordinance is, in the first place, of historical value, since it gives us an insight into some of the difficulties with which St. Vincent had to cope in his relief work. But its principal value lies in the immunity and protection against molestation and seizure which it assures Vincent and his coworkers. A third feature, and the one of greatest interest to us here, is the fact that it gives the stamp of royal approval to Vincent's work as he was conducting it and implicitly creates him an almoner of the realm, granting him and his helpers the monopoly of relief work in the devastated provinces of Picardy and Champagne.[138]

A retrospect of these twenty years of relief work discloses that St. Vincent conducted the different phases of his work along certain well defined lines. On several occasions he very distinctly struck at the root of the evil. He used discrimination in the distribution of alms. The spiritual works of mercy, wherever possible, went hand in hand with material relief. The priests did not restrict their activities to the care of souls, but were employed with the lay brothers and the Daughters of Charity in the distribution of alms and in other charitable services. The sensibilities of the poor were respected; those whom shame restrained from begging were sought after and received aid at home.[139] Publicity was resorted to as a means of making known the needs of the poor and thus of procuring alms. Especially in

[137] Taken from *Ordonnances militaires,* vi., xxviii. and cited in full in Abelly, ii., *Pièces Justificatives,* 638-9.

[138] It is pressing the evidence too far to conclude from this ordinance, as some biographers have done, that Vincent was even virtually hereby created almoner of the entire realm. The ordinance refers only to the provinces of Picardy and Champagne.

[139] In one of his letters to Jean Parre he instructs him to visit a certain family secretly and, if he finds it in great need, to give it alms, but in such a way that only Mlle. Viole, the treasurer of the Ladies of Charity, learns of it. *Lett.,* iii., 635, No. 1517, Oct. 24, 1657.

the relief of the provinces, we note the persistent endeavor to make the poor self-supporting; the parish priests were rehabilitated, local confraternities of charity organized, hospitals restored, the healthy poor supplied with the means of earning their livelihood, and relief withheld as soon as the conditions had improved.

CONCLUSION

St. Vincent de Paul is well-deserving of the prominence and honor he enjoys as model and patron of Catholic charities. He owes his greatness, however, not so much to originality of principle or method in caring for the needs of suffering humanity, as to the vastness and variety of his undertakings, to his remarkable ability and judgment in enlisting the aid and organizing the efforts of men and women of all classes of society for purposes of relief; and to his gift of inspiring others with his glowing love for the poor and with his indomitable courage in continuing, at any cost, a work once undertaken. His quiet, unpretentious methods of procedure in the field of charity, his utter disinterestedness and his love and sympathy for the poor and suffering won for him the confidence and love of his contemporaries.

He early learned the advantages and the possibilities of organized charity and practiced it for a period of forty-three years. His eminently practical bent of mind, united with his intimate knowledge of human nature and of the needs of the poor, together with his disposition to study a matter from all its angles, to learn by experimenting, and to consult the views of others in all matters, enabled him to constitute his organizations along lines so simple, so practical, and so well-suited to the needs of the poor, that they can be adopted in any age with but slight modifications to meet the demands of changing conditions. All his confraternities were under direct ecclesiastical supervision.

He insisted on the frequent holding of meetings for the purpose of maintaining interest and enthusiasm, of creating a better understanding and fostering charity and coöperation among the workers, of ascertaining the needs of the poor, and of discussing means of relief. We fail to find, however, systematic coöperation in any marked degree between his confraternities and other organizations.

He received the necessary funds from endowments and private contributions. He made use of publicity as a means of bringing the needs of the poor before the people and of arousing interest in their relief, and thus indirectly of procuring alms. He received substantial aid from the king and queen and other public officials, but he did not advocate systematic social legislation or government appropriations.

According to St. Vincent's principles and methods, only the strictly needy are entitled to charitable assistance. Their degree of need is in proportion to their inability to earn an honest livelihood. To determine this need in individual cases, investigations are necessary. We also find some traces of case records in his work. The relief in general was suited to the particular need. Vincent, however, always endeavored to rehabilitate the victims of misfortune, and preferred relief in the home to institutional care.

He saw the need of trained social workers. While his preferences were decidedly in favor of the full-time worker, most of the members of his charitable organizations devoted only their spare moments to social relief. In a few cases the workers, both men and women, received pecuniary remuneration for their ministrations of charity.

But perhaps the most important feature of St. Vincent's activities is the stress he laid on the supernatural, or spiritual, element in social service. He insisted that all who engaged in the work lead blameless lives, and that they minister, not only to the wants of the body, but also, as far as possible, to the needs of the soul. His own life and works are a brilliant example of the efficacy of a love of fellow men which is based on the love of God and supernatural motives, and permeated with supernatural values.

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ALPHABETICAL INDEX

Begging, prohibited, 11; condemned by St. Vincent de Paul, 159, 269-70, 272; at Mâcon, 322.
Bérulle, Cardinal Pierre de, 12; and St. Vincent, 15, 16.
Bourdoise, Adrien, 12.

Case Investigation, 119-24, 284-5, 299-300.
Case Records, 124-5, 285.
Champagne, relief of, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Charity, of St. Vincent de Paul, 21; obligations of, 81-3; well-regulated, 83-4; and private ownership, 84-5; motives of, 85-6, 91-2; continuation of Christ's mission, 89-90; sublimity of, 90; organized, *see* Organized Charity; discriminate, *see* Discrimination in Charity.
Child Welfare Work, 195-234.
 Foundlings, 195-219; prior to St. Vincent de Paul, 195-8; beginning of St. Vincent's activities in behalf of, 199; undertaken by way of trial, difficulties, 199-211; number exposed, 211; mortality rate, 212; current legislation, 212; receiving station, 213; nurses, 213-4; workers in touch with, 214; returned to asylum, 214-5; St. Vincent's attitude towards, 215-7; results, 217-8.
 Schools, 219-28; prior to St. Vincent de Paul, 219-22; St. Vincent's efforts for primary education, 222-5; his standard, 225; purpose of education according to St. Vincent, 225-7; his contribution to educational thought, 227-8.
 Industrial Training, 228-34; prior to St. Vincent de Paul, 228-30; in devastated provinces, 231; boys and girls, 231-2; manual training school, 232-4.
Christ, the prototype of Christian charity, 89-90.
Competition and social status, 8, 9-10.
Conditions, financial, 6-7; political, 1-4; religious, 4-6; social, 7-12.
Confraternities, of charity, their extension, 104; officers, 105; their duties, 106-9; "guards of the poor sick," 109; membership, 109-10; Confraternities of Men, *see* Poverty, Relief of; Confraternities of the Towns and Villages, *see* Nursing, Visiting.
Conservatism of St. Vincent de Paul, 51-7; accommodated himself, 51-2; opposed to radical changes, 52-6.
Coöperation, 114-8.

Daughters of Charity, *see* Nursing, Visiting.
Daughters of Providence and the Magdalens, 251-2.
Delinquents, 235-54.
 Prison Work, 235-43; St. Vincent, almoner of the galleys, 235; at Marseilles, 235-6; at Paris, 236; spiritual aid, 237; material relief, 237; "Society for the Prisoners," 237-8; bequest and endowment received, 238; daughters of Charity, 238; results, 239; at Toulon, 239-40; money forwarded through St. Vincent, 240; obliged by contract to render spiritual aid, 240-1; missions conducted, 241-2; secret of success, 242; St. Vincent's attitude toward galley prisoners, 242; other criminals, 243.
 Juvenile Delinquents, 244-7; committed by magistrates to Saint-Lazare, 244; admitted without question, 244; method of treatment, 244-5; purpose of confinement, 245-6; results, 246-7.
 Magdalens, 247-54; prior to St. Vincent, 247-8; *la Madeleine,* 249-51; St. Vincent takes charge of, 249; inmates, 249-50.

Daughters of Providence and, 251-2.
Special protective work, 252-4; St. Vincent's attitude toward Magdalens, 253-4.
Discrimination in charity, 119-25.
The Needy, 119.
Case Investigation, 119-24; 284-5; 299-300.
Case Records, 124-5; 285.
Disregard for law and order, 2-3; a source of misery, 61; efforts of St. Vincent to remedy, 61-3.
Duelling, 5-6; St. Vincent's efforts against, 70; 323.
Duties of the state; protection of individual rights, 65; administration of justice, 65-7; protection of morality, 69-70.

Eudes, Père, 12, 248.

Financial conditions, 6-7; on verge of bankruptcy, 6; taxes, exorbitant, unevenly divided, collected with fraud, 6-7; protests against taxation, 7.
Foundlings, *see* Child Welfare Work.
Francis, Saint, de-Sales, 11, 19, 249.
Free Service, 97-100; preferred, 97, 99-100; charges made at times, 98.
Frondes, 310-11; relief of Paris during, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Funds, 127-36.
Private Contributions, 127-30; collections, 127; poor boxes, 127-8; foundations, 128; direct contributions and legacies, 128-9; raising of sheep, 129; part of revenue of hospital, 129.
State Aid, only in particular cases, 130-1.
Publicity, indirect means of procuring funds, 131-6; 278; 289.

General Estates, 2.
Gennevilliers, Relief of, *see* Poverty, Relief of.

Home for Aged Poor, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Home care, as opposed to institutional, 161-2.
l'Hôpital Général, see Poverty, Relief of.
Hospital Nursing, 185-90; relations between Daughters of Charity and administrators, 186-7; corporal and spiritual aid, 187; first aid, 187; daily routine, 187-9; summary, 190.

Industrial Training, *see* Child Welfare Work.
Insane, care of, 191-3; at Saint-Lazare, 191-2; St. Vincent's charity for, 191; example of Christ, 191; a trying task, 191-2; advantages derived from, 192; justice toward insane, 192; Daughters of Charity and, 192-3; attitude of St. Vincent towards, 193.
Institutional vs. home care, 161-2.
Interest taking, 56-7.

Jansenism and St. Vincent, 27.
Justice, maladministration of, 3-4; administration of, a duty of the state, 66-7.
Juvenile Delinquents, *see* Delinquents.

Ladies of Charity, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Ladies of *l'Hôtel-Dieu, see* Nursing, Visiting.
Ladies of the Parishes, *see* Nursing, Visiting.
Lawsuits, St. Vincent's attitude towards, 26, 67-9.
Livelihood, obligation of earning one's, 157-8.
Lorraine, relief of, *see* Poverty, Relief of.

Mâçon, relief of, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Magdalens, *see* Delinquents.
Maladministration of justice, 3-4.

Meetings, to be held frequently, 111, 264; routine at, 111-2; importance of, 113.
Morality, state's duty to protect, 69-70.

Needy, 119.
Nobles, ambitious, 3; checked by Henry IV and Richelieu, 3; how nobility was determined, 8; an economic burden, 9.
Nurse, 147-53; number of patients, 147; condescending and yielding toward patients, 147-9; not to nurse indiscriminately, 149-51; owes obedience and respect to physician, 151-3.
Nursing, Visiting, 165-84.
Confraternities of the Towns and Villages, 165-9; quantity and quality of food, 166; method of admitting sick, 166-7; daily routine, 167-8; "guards of the poor sick," 168; burying the dead, 168; medical care, 169.
Ladies of the Parishes, 169-71; officers and duties, 170; method of admitting sick, 170; who admitted, 170-1; food furnished by individual Ladies, 171.
Ladies of *l'Hôtel-Dieu*, 172-9; officers, 173; relations between Ladies and religious, 173-4; to dress simply, 174; spiritual aid, prime purpose, 174-5; special catechism prepared, 175; fourteen chosen for spiritual instruction, 175-6; priests appointed, 176; results, 176-7; corporal relief, 177-8; working relations between Ladies and religious, 178-9.
Daughters of Charity, 179-83; their origin, 179-80; relation between Daughters and Ladies of Charity, 180-1; daily programme, 181-2; visits outside prescribed times, 182-3; their relations with the parish priest, 183.
Priests of the Mission and the sick, 183-4.

Olier, Jean Jacques, 12.
Organized charity, need of, 103-4; confraternities, their extension, 104; ecclesiastical supervision, 104-5; officers, 105; their duties, 106-9; "guards of the poor sick," 109; membership, 109-10.

Paris, relief of, during the Fronde, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Parliament of Paris, 2.
Peace, St. Vincent's efforts in behalf of, 61-3.
Personal sanctity of social workers, 90-1.
Personal service, 100-2.
Picardy, relief of, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Poland, relief of, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Political conditions, 1-4; France an absolute monarchy, 1-2; strengthened by Richelieu, 2; disregard for law and order, 2-3; maladministration of justice, 3-4.
Poor, as a class, 9; made little effort to help themselves, 11; St. Vincent's love of, 20, 73-4; "our lords and masters," 74-5.
Poverty, plight of Christianity, 10; plight of state, 10; no systematic relief of, 11; not a disgrace, 74-5; causes of, 75-7; not St. Vincent's effort to eliminate it entirely, 80.
Poverty, Relief of, 255-327.
Confraternities of Men, 255-8; relation to women's confraternities, 255; officers and duties, 256-7; meetings, 257; "associated servant," 257; membership, 257; success, 257-8.
Renti, M. de, and relief of noble refugees, 258-60.
Ladies of Charity, 260-6; beginnings, 260-1; Ladies of the Court; purpose, membership, works, meetings, spiritual exercises, 261-2; other Ladies of Charity, 262-6; membership, officers, duties, 262-3; funds, meetings, spiritual exercises, 263-4; became nucleus of other works, 265; growth, 265; motives of perseverance, 266.
Home for the Aged Poor, 266-9; occasion of foundation, 266-7; arrange-

ment of buildings, 267-8; Daughters of Charity, 268; spiritual care, 268; manual labor, 268; number of inmates, 268; success, 268-9.
l'Hôpital Général, 269-75; prior to St. Vincent, 269-70; occasioned immediately by Home for the Aged Poor, 270-1; enthusiasm of Ladies of Charity, 271-2; opposition of magistrates, 272; edict against mendicancy, 272; St. Vincent refuses to take spiritual charge, 272-3; assistance of St. Vincent, 273-4; rôle played by St. Vincent, 274-5.
Lorraine, relief of, 275-86; miseries depicted, 275-7; beginning of relief, 278; organization, 278; publicity, 278; distribution of alms, 278; sick provided for, 279-80; healthy poor relieved, 280-1; refugees in Paris, 281-2; spiritual aid, 283; estimated amount of relief, 284; case investigation, 284-5; case records, 285; applying remedy to root of evil, 285-6.
Picardy and Champagne, relief of, 286-301; miseries, 286-9; beginning of relief, 289; organization and methods at Paris and in the provinces, 289-92; rehabilitation of clergy, 292-4; Daughters of Charity, 294-5; hospitals restored, 295-6; other aid, 296-7; orphans, 297-8; Irish refugees, 298; burying the dead, 298-9; rehabilitation, 299; case investigation, 299-300; estimated amount of relief, 300-1.
Poland, relief of, 301-9; miseries, 301-2; missionaries sent, 303; their activities, 303-5; Daughters of Charity, 305-7; religious of Sainte-Marie, 307-8; confraternities of charity, 308.
Gennevilliers, relief of, 309.
Paris, relief of, during the Frondes, 310-22; the Frondes, 310-11; St. Vincent goes to Saint-Germain, 311-2; Saint-Lazare, 313; Ladies of Charity, 313; applies remedy to root of evil, 314-6; organization and personnel, 316-7; central warehouse, 317; food supplied, 318; soup kitchens, 319; poor sought out, 319-20; orphans, 320; unprotected girls and women, 320; priests, 320-1; spiritual aid, 321-2.
Mâçon, relief of, 322-3; organization and method of relief, 322-3; results, 323.
Summary, 324-7.
Priests of the Mission and the Sick, *see* Nursing, Visiting.
Prison Work, *see* Delinquents.
Private ownership and St. Vincent, 55-6; and charity, 84-5.
Publicity, indirect method of procuring funds, 131-6, 278, 289.

Reform, 11-2.
Rehabilitation, 159-61, 281, 292-4, 299.
Relief, general nature of, 155-7; who shall receive, 155; kind of, 155; no technical standard as norm, 155-7; rehabilitation, 159-61; institutional vs. home care, 161-2.
Relief of poverty, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Religious conditions, 4-6; national spirit in ecclesiastical affairs, 4; king receives ecclesiastical revenues, 4-5; the Church, a royal institution, 5; religious indifference and immorality, 5-6.
Remedy applied at root of evil, 77-9, 285-6, 314-6.
Renaudot, Théophraste, 79, 117.
Renti, M. de, *see* Poverty, Relief of.
Richelieu, bent upon strengthening monarchy, 2; opposed by St. Vincent, 19-20, 61, 64.
Rights, individual, absorbed by state, 2; duty of state to protect, 65.
Royal power, origin and nature of, 2; according to St. Vincent, 59; obedience due to, 59-61; duties of: protection of individual rights, 65; administration of justice, 65-7; protection of morality, 69-70.

Schools, *see* Child Welfare Work.
Service, free, preferred, 97, 99-100; charges made at times, 98.
Service, personal, 100-2.
Sin, a source of public misery, 75-7.

Social classes and St. Vincent, 54-5.
Social conditions, 7-12; increase of population, 7; influence of feudalism, 7-8; clergy, nobles, third estate, 8; a financial burden and an economic asset, 9; the rich and the poor, 9; competition and social status, 9-10.
Social service, all classes to engage in, 137-9.
Social workers:
Personal sanctity of, 90-1; to be drawn from all classes, 137; women played more important rôle, 137-8; relative efficiency, 138-9.
Trained social worker, 139-44; need of, 139-40; method and nature of training, 140-4.
Full-time workers preferred, 144-5.
Volunteer workers preferred, 145-7.
Soup kitchens, 319.
State, priests and affairs of, 70-2.
State aid, only in particular cases, 130-1.
State power, *see* Royal power.
Supernatural in social service, 89-97; active charity, a continuation of Christ's mission, 89-90; dignity of active charity, 90; personal sanctity of social workers, 90-1; supernatural motive, 91-2; care for spiritual needs, 92-6, 268, 283, 321-2; its influence on corporal relief, 96-7.

Taxes, exorbitant, unevenly divided, collected with fraud, 6-7; protests against, 7.
Trained social worker, *see* Social workers.

Vincent de Paul, Saint, biographical sketch of, 13-7; physical appearance of, 17; sickly, 17-9; meek, 19; lack of human respect in, 19-20; affable, 20; his love for poor, 20-1; reluctant to open up new fields, 21-2; absence of jealousy in, 23-4; unobtrusive, 25-6; opposed to lawsuits, 26; educated, 26-7; and Jansenism, 27; his grasp of mind, 27; prudent, 28-9; his humility of judgment, 29-34; learned by experience, 34-6; his knowledge of human nature, 36-40; sincere in character, 41-2; slow, 42-5; persevering, 45; a miser of time, 46; fitted for his work, 46-7; accommodated himself, 51-2; opposed to radical changes, 52-5.
Visiting nursing, *see* Nursing, Visiting.

War, not intrinsically wrong, 63-5; a source of poverty, 75.

VITA AUCTORIS

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